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# METHODS

OF

# TEACHING MODERN LANGUAGES

*PAPERS ON THE VALUE AND ON METHODS OF MODERN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION.*

BY

A. Marshall Elliott, Calvin Thomas, E. S. Joynes, W. T. Hewett, F. C. de Sumichrast, A. Lodeman, F. M. Warren, E. H. Babbitt, C. H. Grandgent, O. B. Super, C. F. Kroeh, W. Stuart Macgowan, H. C. G. von Jagemann.

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# PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

In all departments of education teachers to-day, more than ever before, are reading the literature of their profession; and it is hoped that modern language instructors may find in the following papers stimulus and suggestion in a branch of education that is now recognized as exceedingly important in any scheme of liberal training.

Teachers of the modern languages have repeatedly inquired for copies of papers or addresses dealing with their profession, and it was suggested to us that it would be very acceptable and helpful if we should publish a collection of some of the best thoughts on the value and methods of Modern Language Teaching. We have therefore compiled this book of addresses and articles that have come to our notice or have been mentioned to us by prominent friends of modern language instruction. By kindly consenting to their publication in this form, the authors have co-operated with us in presenting pedagogical opinions of interest to the thoughtful consideration of scholars and teachers.

The order of these papers is due partly to their respective dates, and partly to the order in which they were suggested or presented to us.

D. C. Heath & Co.

March, 1893.

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# METHODS OF TEACHING MODERN LANGUAGES.

## MODERN LANGUAGES AS A COLLEGE DISCIPLINE.[1]

BY PROFESSOR A. M. ELLIOTT, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY.

THERE is one aspect of the Greek-Modern Language question on which there has been no special stress laid, so far as I have seen, in the various discussions of it that Mr. Adams's paper has called out; viz., the importance of modern language study as a special disciplinary factor of our higher education. In truth, the few references to the subject outside of the favorable view held in the Phi-Beta-Kappa oration would seem to imply a denial of the existence of such an element altogether in the modern idioms as compared with the classic tongues. The eminent president of Yale College asserts that they "are distinctly recognized as essential conditions of professional and business success, or accomplishments of gentlemanly culture." Professor Josiah P. Cooke of Harvard assures us that, in his opinion, "to compare German literature with the Greek, or, what is worse, French literature with the Latin, as a means of culture, implies a forgetfulness of the true spirit of literary culture." And a leading contemporary journal, after qualifying all controversy of this sort as an "inexcusable display of ignorance," adds with a

1 Read before the Modern Language Association of America, 1887, and reprinted with the permission of the author.

sort of oracular sanctity, "And for philology, there practically is no foundation except Latin and Greek, — and Greek rather than Latin." Such expressions as these show most clearly the dogmatic spirit in which this whole subject is approached by many advocates of the exclusive classical idea when the question of training comes up. As zealous holders of the only true faith, they would fain exclude the converts to modernism from all the distinctive elevating influences of their creed, and would relegate them to the domain of purely utilitarian interests, or to the changing caprices of society; and this subordinate position is granted them more from the necessities of the age in which we live than from any special feeling of their worth as members of the great corporate body of scholars. For the scholar in truth it is even hinted, in some cases, that their field is useless, and for the educator in particular the subjects that occupy them are regarded as a species of cumbersome, worthless lumber that litters up the mental workshop, and that must be gotten rid of as soon as possible, if the range of the active powers of the mind is to be widened. In other words, it is set down as a tenet of axiomatic wisdom that modern languages have no place whatever among the formative elements which help to develop the mental faculties. This doctrine, however extreme it may seem, when thus plainly stated, is held by a large majority of those who represent, at present, the guiding force in matters of education throughout our country; but I apprehend that it is for the most part the result of traditional beliefs, or of the unhappy failure of methods, or of sheer prejudice in a few cases, rather than of actual experience in such matters. It may be doubted, in fact, whether this important branch of learning has been represented by rigid scientific methods in our educational system sufficient to test even the most elementary worth of its subjects as factors of a living power suited to intellectual growth. Until this shall be done, it is difficult to understand the fairness of any comparison

between them and another set of kindred subjects that has long received special cultivation by the most eminent scholars, and has held a prominent place in the training of our youth. In the controversy now before the country with reference to the merits of the study of Greek in our higher institutions, as compared with that of science and modern languages, I fail to see the appropriateness of disparaging remarks on the educating qualities of the latter, especially as to that part of the question that touches upon the modern idioms. Science has had the chance to cast off her swaddling clothes, and it is now only a question of time as to the position she will eventually occupy in the list of studies that are to constitute the building-elements of the mind. With the modern languages it is wholly different. They have but just started upon the road of a true scientific development, and will naturally require some opportunity to show their value as educating elements. But, on general principles, such comparisons as these are more or less odious in all circumstances, and they become especially so when there is an evident intention to multiply the claims to superiority of a given department of learning over others that are allowed few or more of the privileges that attach to the would-be favorite. The inconsistency of comparing the potential forces of any two systems of educational training without first according to both of them similar opportunities of cultivation, and like circumstances of growth, is obvious to every one who has not the drag-chain of some creed about his neck.

The reproach flung at the modern languages by the partisans of the exclusive order of classical studies, that they do not show brilliant results of scholarship in this country, is but a covert way of begging the question in a discussion of their relative standing in any grade of culture. Up to now no chance has been given to show whether favorable results may be obtained from them, since other linguistic learning has held the sway, to the driving out of all serious modern language

study. The time for pursuing them is often cut down to a minimum; far less teaching force, proportionately, is allowed to them than to other departments; no fixed standard of requirement is set for them, as an academic discipline; in fine, they are practically crowded out of many college schedules, and then mercilessly inveighed against because those who follow them do not present, with all these disadvantages, as high a standard of critical linguistic acquirement as if they had spent years of careful preparation in them. Until they shall have had a fair trial in the hands of well-trained, competent teachers; until the study of them shall have been given all the favor in time and position which are accorded to the classics in our colleges, it is difficult to see the justness of any demand that they shall make the same showing of general training or of special scholarly attainments.

If we inquire into the depreciatory feeling with which the modern languages are regarded by scholars generally, we shall find, I think, that the responsibility for a great part of it, at least, rests upon the shoulders of those who have the chief power of appointment to positions in our higher institutions. The fatal college nepotism that has pervaded this whole system in many places has practically rendered it a sort of closed corporation to all who are educated outside the pale of their own individual sanctuaries. The natural consequence has been that young, inexperienced, and, only too often, poorly prepared assistants have been called to office, and through them the departments have had to suffer not alone for a lack of efficient instruction, but also in the general appreciation both of the student and of an intelligent public. This misfortune has fallen more frequently upon the modern languages, perhaps, than upon any other departments, from the simple fact that the idea is so generally prevalent that anybody can teach them.

We have only to examine a considerable number of catalogues of our colleges to see that this unfortunate state of

affairs is much more extensive than is generally supposed. A boy who has spent one academic year of two hours per week, for example, on his French, is then called to teach it; or, again, a gentleman who knows nothing of either French or German receives an appointment in them, and goes abroad for two months in the summer to prepare himself for the important position; such are but too common illustrations of the kind of hands into which these branches often fall. What wonder, then, in such circumstances, that the pupil should lose all respect for his subject, and grow conceited with reference to his own acquirements in it, while as yet he has not an inkling of decent knowledge. This procedure is a downright disgrace to any system of instruction, and should be forced aside by the timely action of the leading institutions of this country, by placing all language study upon an equal footing with the same rights and privileges, and by demanding like results of discipline from both the classical and modern idioms. The time would then soon come in which the latter would no longer be regarded as fit tools simply for the business man, or as only pleasing accomplishments of the society *dilettanti*.

The importance of having specially trained teachers in this work would seem manifest from the very nature of the subject, and yet no such necessity has been generally recognized by us up to the present time. That intelligent young men become in consequence simple information machines, stuffed with systems of facts that they have no chance to digest, and that they come to play mere parrot *rôles*, learning their task-work without any stimulus to awaken their powers of observation or shape their judgment, is unfortunately a sad fact in much of our modern language study. A further consequence of this state of things is a degradation of the subject, a stifling of all spontaneous interest, and a deadening apathy on the part of the student. No incentive is placed before him to awaken curiosity for learning, to strengthen the perceptive

faculties, and to cultivate the power of concentrated mental effort. It is to this end that I would urge here an intelligent historical, disciplinary study of these subjects, as peculiarly adapted to a wide range and variety of minds. In recognizing this cardinal fact, German educators have given them an important place in their schools and gymnasia, and for the last two decades have been thereby rewarded with most gratifying results in the general linguistic training of their youth. Nowhere else as there has stress been laid upon the philological study of these idioms, and the natural consequence has followed that faulty methods have been rooted out, the standard of their appreciation everywhere raised, and rich fruits garnered in their advance in academic discipline. It was this religious regard for the spirit rather than the letter of language that lifted Germany out of the Slough of Despond in which all linguistic study was sunk three-quarters of a century ago, and gave her such vantage ground over all other nations that they will probably never be able to overtake her in this work. Here, too, just in proportion as methods have been bettered and the true spirit of linguistic training developed, the modern languages have risen higher and higher in the scale of potent agencies for mind-culture, and, in some parts of the empire, have for years stood beside the classics and shared with them all their rights and privileges. The beginnings of a similiar change, too, have been noted in our own country, where, in proportion as the worth of these studies has become known, they have universally taken a higher stand among the *disciplinæ* for special education. The wealth of material they offer for philological training and historical investigation is becoming more appreciated every day, and it is now only a bold spirit and rigidly scientific method that are generally needed to raise them, in the estimation of scholars, above the plane of simple "polite accomplishments." The principles and scope of their scientific study have never been stated clearly and sharply enough in our plans of college edu-

cation, and the result has been that they are only too often regarded as fit subjects for those who work little, and therefore as necessarily constituting a part of the "soft electives," that "Serbonian bog" where all intellectual virtues are swallowed up.

The defective methods according to which they are sometimes taught, and the summary manner in which they are frequently shoved aside when they clash with other studies, cannot but discredit them in the mind of the serious student. It cannot be doubted, too, that it is a grave mistake for educators to depreciate their value so long as they occupy a place in our scheme of instruction, since it is absurd to suppose they do not exert a detrimental influence on the habits of discipline in other departments when they are thus disparagingly treated. No one set of disciplinary elements can be specially neglected, as a part of any given system, without producing baneful effects upon others connected with it, however remote they may be in subject-matter, or different in mode of presentation. But we are obliged to confess that this attitude of college authorities toward the modern language branches is in part, at least, the fault of the department itself. The shiftless, slip-shod instruction that boasts of teaching any language with two hours per week, during a single academic year, must naturally tend to make a slouch of the otherwise honest, enthusiastic student, and turn into a conceited charlatan the pupil who, for lack of previous sound training, is disposed to skim over his subjects. To earnest and experienced educators such a procedure must seem sheer nonsense, and it is to be expected, therefore, that they will have as little of it as possible. The fact of the matter is, that our whole system of modern language instruction needs overhauling in this respect before it can hope to command the consideration that it ought to have, both from scholars in other departments, and from the public at large. It is useless to plead for favor on the one hand, and blame those who underrate its value on the

other, unless we recast our methods, and show by convincing results that there is abundant material for our work. The subject-matter is surely not at fault with reference to the present abnormal position this branch of learning holds in the estimation of scholars. Obloquy has been thrown upon it because of unjust prejudices in certain cases; in others because the new-comer does not tread the accustomed ruts of a traditional creed. It is, therefore, viewed with suspicion; but until its powers shall have been tested by the same discipline of years required for other departments, and it shall have failed to meet the demands made of it, we can hardly esteem it fair to condemn it to the exclusive and not flattering *régime* of society circles and of business interests. No means, in my opinion, could at present be more efficient in raising this subject to a higher level of development than the introduction of a thorough historical basis for all college work. It is stating a trite fact when we assert that every intelligent pupil is interested in understanding the whys and wherefores of phenomena that he has learned to use mechanically. How much greater interest, then, must a subject arouse in him from the beginning, if, instead of playing a parrot-like part, he is led to exercise his ingenuity and test his powers in the discovery of relations before hidden to him; and this he will readily do if the history is steadily kept before him of the growth of form and expression, with their resemblances to modes of thought already familiar to him, and to the natural development of the varying phenomena of speech in general. Language thus ceases to be a sort of "Fifteen Puzzle" to him, since he sees philosophy enough in it to lubricate the otherwise dry machinery of grammar. He learns with zest any new series of facts connected with it because they serve, in their turn, to further illustrate the principles that have become fundamental notions, so to speak, in his mind. And no experienced educator, I think, will maintain that the learner can acquire these habits of comparison and reflection more

readily in a vehicle or system of thought the farther separated it is from his own. The real training that belongs to all language-study must come more rapidly in proportion as we can eliminate differences of idioms during the primary stages of it, and carry the pupil back to a few principal sources of growth, which have their *raison d'être* in a common origin. The modern idioms will suggest themselves, here, as most valuable adjuncts to this rational mode of language-study, since their processes of creation and development lie within the range of strict historical proof, and their life-history may be followed up step by step through all the stages of their complex growth. If it is the object to get the learner as far away as possible from his natural intellectual bent, as some writers on this subject would seem to suggest, why not ply him with Chinese or Arabic formula, which would require extraordinary mental gymnastics? Why not force him, from the start, to spend time in casting his thoughts in the artificial mould of Sanskrit or some other complex system, as foreign as possible to his natural analytic routine? It is precisely to avoid this squandering of time and energy that a study of the modern European languages is so useful before proceeding to that of the older tongues. The student in them becomes acquainted with forms of thought-expression closely allied to his own; his mind can suit itself to the new clothing with less waste of time than by the reverse process; and thus by a regular progression from the better-known types of his own tongue to the less familiar word-building and phrase-setting of the new idiom, he attains the objects of his labors. I hold, in truth, that the rational way to learn language is the same as for other things; that is, to move from the known to the unknown, to pass from the native tongue to the next-lying living system, where this is possible, and thence to that form of speech in which the so-called dead language is locked up. To study Latin, therefore, I would begin with French and work on to a tolerable mastery of Italian, after which the mother-

idiom would come almost of itself, and all three languages would be learned more understandingly than the ancient tongue alone can possibly be according to the present system; and the time required for all three, I think, would be found little more than what we now spend on Latin. However unorthodox this doctrine may seem, I have seen it tried in a few cases with such marked success that I am sure, if for Mr. Adams some such bridge as this could have been thrown across the chasm between his native English and the domain of Greek roots, we should never have known "A College Fetich." But, on the other hand, even if we accept the current theory, and place the older idioms first in the line of linguistic topics to be presented to the mind, irrespective of any natural relation, it seems to me self-evident that our order of progression would be incomplete if we should allow any break to exist between the training-period of youth and the future practical activity of the man. Between college and life there ought to be no gap. The ending of every system of instruction, whatever it may be, should naturally lap on to the sphere of those broader and more varied duties that crowd upon the man in the fierce battle of his after-life. And I cannot but feel, therefore, that Schleiermacher is wholly correct when he remarks in his *Erziehungslehre*, "If the natural passage from the school into life is not reached, then we have either been upon a false route, or we did not begin right." Have we in America struck this bridge in language-study? Does the present position of modern languages in our higher institutions, as connecting-link between the old and the new, between classicism and modern life, fully represent that stage of careful transition discipline which our age demands?

# OBSERVATIONS UPON METHOD IN THE TEACHING OF MODERN LANGUAGES.[1]

BY PROFESSOR CALVIN THOMAS, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN.

It is a very common practice in professional discussions to begin with some remarks upon the importance of one's subject. I, however, will venture upon a different kind of exordium by expressing the opinion that my subject is not of much importance; or, at any rate, that it is not half so momentous as a great many people suppose it to be. I have a conviction which has been strengthening for some time, that the subject of method in teaching receives in general more attention than it deserves. I think it probable, nay to my mind it is certain, that a good deal of the teaching that goes on in this country is suffering severely because of laying too much stress upon matters of method. Quite a large portion of the teaching fraternity are making of method, if not a fetish to worship, at least a hobby to ride, and that to the detriment of the country's highest pedagogical interests. If I can trust my own observation, a person's reverence for what is commonly called method usually varies inversely with his own intellectual breadth.

Let these remarks of mine not be misunderstood. There is a sense in which a teacher's method is the most important thing about him, is, in fact, the essential source of his power and his influence. His method in this sense is nothing less than his entire character displaying itself in his work. It designates not so much a mode of procedure for accomplishing

[1] Read at the first meeting of the Michigan Schoolmasters' Club, 1886.

a particular piece of work, as rather the spirit which informs and directs all his work. In other words, it is the working expression of his personality, his general way of imparting his own intellectual life to his pupil. But the word method is much more commonly used as synonymous with routine. It has reference to the details of procedure, and is a name, not for the incommunicable secret of personality, but for the easily divulged secret of machinery. Now, it is method in this latter sense that I think receives more respect and more attention than it deserves. I am aware, of course, that it is not easy always to keep these two senses rigidly apart in one's mind, and to respect method in the former sense while thinking but indifferently of it in the latter. One's routine may be intimately bound up with his personality, but it need not be so, and usually it is not so. Nor do I say that matters of routine are never of any moment. There may be circumstances in which it is highly important to decide between the comparative merits of two or more processes for accomplishing a given result. What I deprecate is the wide-spread tendency I observe to treat routine as if that were the thing of chief importance; as if it were the real key to a teacher's power and usefulness. For that it certainly is not. There are always two other questions upon which more depends than upon this questions of, How? These are the questions, What? and Why? Let the teacher put to himself the inquiries: What knowledge or capacity is it that I am seeking to impart? and to what end? Let him settle these clearly in his own mind, and then the question, How best to teach? will usually take care of itself. At any rate, it will no longer seem a difficult or bewildering problem.

Having now defined my position with regard to method in general, I turn to the subject of modern languages for the purpose of illustrating, amplifying, and perhaps here and there qualifying, the views already set forth.

In recent years the public has heard a great deal about a so-

called natural method in the teaching of languages. This method is really nothing new in the history of the world; it has been known and used for centuries. But it has acquired great notoriety in this country of late on account of the vigorous crusade its votaries have been carrying on against the traditional practice of the schools. What this traditional practice is, is of course well enough known. A pupil who is to study, let us say German, is first required to commit to memory the grammatical inflections of the language. For the purpose of aiding his memory in the retention of the grammatical forms, and also for the purpose of giving him the beginnings of a vocabulary, he reads as he goes along a certain number of easy German exercises, and likewise translates a number of easy English exercises into German. All of this study is essentially grammatical. The learner then takes up some German reader, with which he works for a few weeks or months, as the case may be, the aim being to fix thoroughly in his mind the elementary principles of the language he has been studying. After this he takes up the study of literature, and his goal is henceforth simply to learn to read German as readily and as intelligently as possible.

Now, a few years ago we began to hear from certain quarters that all this is wrong; that a pupil should learn a foreign tongue just as he learned his mother tongue in his infancy; that is, by at once beginning to hear it spoken and to imitate what he hears. We are told that the initial study of grammar is unnatural, since the child hears nothing of the grammar of his own language until after he has learned to speak said language, and to speak it, mayhap, with commendable correctness. From this the corollary naturally follows that the teacher's chief effort should be to see to it that his pupil shall of all things learn to speak the language he is studying. The originators of this agitation were in the main very excellent teachers, who would have succeeded with any method. As it was, having secured good results of a certain kind, they began

to think the magic was in the method rather than in themselves. They were able to secure striking testimonials from distinguished persons as to their success in teaching pupils to speak, and so they started an agitation. And the agitation has grown. Its promoters have multiplied and spread abroad through the land. They are busily writing articles, essays, prefaces, in praise of their doctrine. To a certain extent they have got the ear of the public, which is usually ready to listen to any one that comes talking majestically about "modern ways" of doing things, and winking his eye and biting his thumb at the expense of the old fogies. Many of these energetic reformers use very positive language. They tell us in effect that a notable educational conflict has been going on, which has now, however, been decided in their favor. They claim to have carried through a great reform, and do not hesitate to assure the public that any one who in these days continues to teach a modern language in the old way is behind the age. Out of much literature in this vein which is continually falling under my eye I will quote only the following, from the preface to a lately published German Reader: —

"It is now conceded by most teachers," says this writer, "that, in learning any modern language, little is gained by beginning with the study of the grammar, and that the most successful method is the natural one, by which a child learns to speak its own language; i. e., by constant practice in conversation. A mass of grammatical rules and forms at the outset renders the subject dry and uninteresting, and the time so spent can be much more profitably employed in colloquial exercises, which are absolutely necessary in acquiring fluency of speech, no matter how thoroughly the rules of grammar have been mastered."

Surely it is trifling with serious matters to say of such a statement as this that it is important if true. If true, it is, in the light of what is now actually going on in the great majority of American schools and colleges, enough to take one's breath away.

What, then, are the merits of this position? What are the general merits of this controversy so far as there is any controversy? (The quarrel is after all a very one-sided one.) This is a question which, as I surmise, must be of especial interest to persons who may have found it necessary or convenient to undertake to teach a modern language before having attained to a very wide or deep scholarship in the language, and before they have formed through personal experience an independent judgment with regard to the matter under consideration. Such persons may well wish to know how a conservative teacher can go on his way and live and labor unabashed in the face of all these breezy proclamations like the one quoted.

Well, I have something to say on that subject; but, before proceeding to say it, I desire to remark incidentally that the statement quoted is very far from being true. What the writer says is: "*It is now conceded by most teachers*, that in learning any modern language, little is gained by beginning with the study of the grammar." To be true, the statement should run: "It is now conceded, and for that matter always has been conceded by most teachers, that with pupils of a certain kind, and for the attainment of certain results, little is gained by beginning with the study of the grammar." Or to speak more explicitly: all teachers are agreed that if you wish to teach any one to speak a language, the learner must be given practice in speaking. The sooner you begin, and the more practice you offer, the better. But this is not an admission wrung but yesterday from the teaching profession by the successes of the natural method. Nobody, so far as I know, ever held or advocated any other opinion.

Then, as to that other observation that a "mass of grammatical rules and forms at the outset renders the subject dry and uninteresting," when shall we hear the end of such nonsense? When shall we see the end of this wretched desire to make all things soft and sweet for the youths and maidens of

this generation ? Grammar deals with the facts and the laws of language, and language is the most important of all human institutions. Whatever interest, whatever charm, attaches to the study of any historical science ought to attach to the study of language. The facts of grammar are as interesting as any other facts, and the laws of grammar are as interesting as other laws. It was doubtless unfortunate to subordinate sense, poetry, philosophy, history, — everything to grammar, as was done by a good many teachers, especially of the Greek and Latin, a few years ago. There are better uses for the masterpieces of literature than to be made so many vehicles for teaching grammar. But, on the other hand, it is equally pernicious to speak of grammar and to treat it as if it were some miasma from which the dear boys and girls must be tenderly shielded just as far as possible. Let them learn the grammar and learn it well. It will be good for them. If the teacher has the instincts of a scholar himself, the facts of language will not seem dull or uninteresting to him ; and if they do not seem so to him, he will usually contrive that they shall not seem so to his pupil. But suppose that they do seem so ? Or rather, suppose the learner occasionally has a sensation that he is working ? What of it ? There are worse things in the world than that. He is supposed to be preparing in school for life, and when he gets out of school the Genius of Life will admonish him at every turn that valuable acquisitions have to be worked for. He may as well learn early to face this simple doctrine and to make the best of it. It is no part of the teacher's business to make things easy at the expense of thoroughness. It is a mistake if he thinks that the real and lasting regard of his pupil can be won in that way. Healthy boys and girls, and young men and young women in school and college, do not want an easy time. They wish for work to do, and they enjoy work. It is not their desire to float down the stream with a soft-hearted pedagogue to keep them clear of all the difficulties and asperities of navigation.

They prefer to paddle, and if the course lies up the stream, against a tolerably swift current, they like it all the better. In the high school they may talk freely about the sweets of idleness, and may at times seem to be rather fertile in precautions against over-exertion. So the college student will often profess to have a lively affinity for what he calls a "soft snap." But this is simply a conventional student dialect, — a surface indication, which belies what is underneath. The truth is that the vast majority of students in both school and college prefer to be kept busy, and they have, both in the long run and in the short run, the greatest respect for the teacher who gives them work to do, insists upon their doing it, and does not seem over anxious to make things easy. *Res severa verum gaudium* is the true student motto the world over.

I am of course not saying that of two ways for accomplishing a given end the more difficult and laborious is to be chosen on the ground that students after all like to work, and that work is good for them. By no means. There are always subjects enough to learn which will tax one's strength all that it ought to be taxed. It is therefore always a proper and wise economy to select the easiest way of attaining any given result. What I am arguing is, that when a line of work has once proved its usefulness, it is not to be discarded and spoken ill of simply because the learner finds it difficult or "dry." The road which he thinks dry and difficult may be precisely the best road for him to travel.

I come now to the application of the thought expressed some time ago, which was, in effect, that any controversy concerning method in teaching will usually be found to have underlying it a more important question as to what should be taught. This is certainly true in the case before us. The issue between the advocates of the natural method and those who use the other method does not turn upon the comparative merits of two ways for accomplishing the same purpose; it

turns upon the comparative merits of two different purposes to be accomplished.

The alternative is simply this: Is it best in teaching a modern language to make it our chief aim that the learner shall acquire some ability to speak the language, or shall we make it our chief business to teach him to read the language with some scientific understanding of it? If one accepts the former as the true ideal of school and college instruction, then it is very certain that the natural method, or any modification of it which affords the utmost possible practice in speaking, is the best method. If, on the other hand, one accepts the latter as the true ideal, then it is equally certain that the other method is the better.

What, then, is the true ideal? What ought we to aim at in the teaching of a modern language? Or rather, what ought we to aim at in the teaching of a modern language in school and college? This limitation of the question is of importance, since the circumstances under which we are compelled to work in school and college may very possibly exercise a determining influence upon us when we are attempting to decide the questions what to aim at and how to go to work. For example: I might, and very certainly I should, proceed in one way with a large class of university students whom I expected to meet four times a week, and in quite another way with a child who was to live with me for several years in my own family; and in still another way with a class of three or four whom I expected to be with me for several hours each day. We must look at this question with reference to the circumstances that are, and forever must be, imposed upon us in school and college. German, for example, is not begun by our pupils in their early childhood, nor can the study be kept up for ten or twelve years. In the present crowded state of our school and collegiate courses such a thing is out of the question, and it must forever remain out of the question unless it can be shown that some great, some very great advantage

would result from it. In my opinion no such showing will ever be made. I admit, of course, that if all persons who studied German in our schools were to begin the study in childhood, and to begin it with the expectation of keeping it up through a long succession of years, then certain questions might arise with regard to the teaching of the language which are not now living questions at all. I, however, am very far from thinking that such an innovation would be desirable. So that I can claim to be discussing this subject here not simply from the standpoint of what is and what is likely to continue to be, but also from the standpoint of what ought to be.

Upon hearing this inquiry, What should be our aim in the teaching of German? many persons, particularly those who are themselves unschooled, will be inclined to answer at once: Why, it should be your aim to impart to your pupil a complete mastery of the language, so that he can read, write, and speak it; can even think in it, or crack jokes and write verses in it. But those who have done some work upon a foreign language, and especially those who have tried to teach one, will understand at once that a programme of this sort would be simply what Mr. Tilden called a "barren ideality." It is of no use to hitch our wagon to a star in that fashion. To learn to speak any language in any decent manner demands long and assiduous practice in speaking. To learn to speak it at all well demands long association with those who speak it as their native tongue. And this requires time. To learn to read a language, again, requires long practice in reading. One must have read a large number of books from different periods of the language. He must have acquired some first-hand familiarity with its literature. And this, again, requires time. We have here two different disciplines. Now, if in our school work one of these disciplines is accented, the other must be neglected. There is simply no other way, without involving a very much greater expenditure of time than we now make. Which, then, shall we accent?

Among the great unschooled public the ability, real or apparent, to speak a foreign language undoubtedly counts as a great thing. They look upon such ability as the natural and necessary outcome of linguistic study. Parents covet the accomplishment for their children. For a long time a little French was a necessary item in the intellectual outfit of a fashionable young lady. All over the country multitudes of boys and girls are trying to learn to speak German, and that without reference to any particular use they expect to make of the acquisition, but from the general impression that it's a good thing to do. Very intelligent people are now and then found crying out that it is a disgrace that students should pursue the study of German four or five years, and then not be able to speak it. As if that, and that only, were the true criterion by which to decide whether the student has got any good from the study.

Well, now let us inquire what is the precise value, for average graduates of our schools and colleges, of the ability to speak a foreign language? I say average graduates, since it is obviously with reference to them that we must shape our courses of study and our methods of teaching. We cannot shape these with reference to the occasional student who might wish to prepare for a residence in Germany or for a position as German clerk in a business house.

Whatever value the ability to speak a foreign language may have for average graduates ought to be found, I should say, along one of two lines. Its value ought to be either practical or educational. I am aware of no other lines of importance along which its value ought reasonably to be sought. The word "practical" I use here in the manner of the world's people as synonymous with commercial. That is, to be sure, a very vicious use of the word. I would not for a moment admit that, even if a much better case could be made out than can be for the commercial value of the ability to speak a foreign language, that therefore we should make the imparting

of such ability the chief aim of our teaching in the schools. We cannot throw too often or too hard in the face of the public the fact that our business is educational. Our work is the building up and the leading out of minds, and not the teaching of crafts, trades, tricks, and *techniques* to get a living with. Whatever has a high educational value has a high *practical* value, since nothing is of more practical moment than the training of minds. But using the dialect of the age, what is to be said of the practical, i. e., commercial, value of the ability to speak a foreign tongue? This is a matter about which I imagine that a good deal of loose thinking and talking prevails, which have given rise to misapprehension.

It is of course true that the command of two languages has, for one who is seeking a position in a community where there is a large foreign population, a real commercial value. To deny this would be absurd. Professional and business men are continually saying in our hearing, "I'd give a thousand dollars if I could speak German." The boy or the girl who desires employment in a city like this, or like Detroit, undoubtedly has an advantage if able to speak German. But what kind of ability is it that is meant in such cases? A smattering of the language will not suffice. It is not enough that the applicant should be able to say, Good-morning! and How do you do? and What time is it? It will not suffice if he even have at his tongue's end the whole wisdom of Ollendorf, and be able to say ever so glibly that the wife of the butcher is more handsome than the nephew of the baker. But he must be able to *speak German;* not as school-children use that phrase, not as it is used by the professors in summer schools of languages, but as men of business and of the world understand it. He must have, at least for all the purposes of the position that he seeks, a fluent and ready command of the language.

But cannot this superior grade of ability be imparted in the schools? Practically it cannot. It is indeed true that

if any competent teacher were to take a very small class of boys, all of whom wished to become German clerks in a dry-goods store, and if he were to meet them every day for an hour and talk nothing but dry-goods store to them for a matter of two or three years, he might thus contrive to give them an indifferent preparation for entrance upon the duties of German clerk in a dry-goods store. But their preparation would be none of the best. They could get a much better one, and that too in less time, by means of an apprenticeship, or by living in a German family. And then the time has not come for managing our educational institutions on that principle.

But perhaps it may be asked whether it is not possible, by means of general conversational instruction and practice in the schools, to impart such command of the German language for all purposes, that the learner upon leaving school can fill any position where a knowledge of German is required? In answer to that question it must be said emphatically that it is not possible. The conditions of the school forbid. The teacher meets his pupils in classes (and these classes are often large), five hours or less each week of the school year. Each pupil has a few minutes' practice on certain days of the week in speaking German. All the rest of the time, with his teacher, his schoolmates, his parents at home, he speaks English. Now, no one can learn to speak a foreign language in that way. To do that requires months or even years of constant practice, through association with those who speak the language as their mother tongue. You can no more teach a person to speak a foreign language by means of class instruction given at stated intervals, than you can teach him to swim by giving courses of illustrated lectures in a $7 \times 9$ bath-room. The thing never has been done, never will be done by the natural method or by any other method; and any one who professes to be able to do it may be safely set down as a quack. I know very well that some rather striking results can be achieved in this direction. I have experimented with

the matter myself, and am familiar with the reports of those who have done much more and much better than I can claim to have done. It is possible by sedulous attention to the subject, continued through a considerable period of time, to teach a class to speak German in the class-room with tolerable fluency and correctness. Any one not an expert listening to such a class easily gets the impression that they can really handle the German language, — can actually "speak German" in some proper sense of the term. But alas, it is only the class-room dialect that they speak. Their discourse moves in a very narrow range. They do but say over certain phrases and sentences and idioms that they have heard and learned. Outside of this beaten round of expression, which they never hear or need to use outside of the class-room, they are perfectly helpless. On the street, at the store, in society, their German "conversation" leaves them in the lurch at once when they attempt to operate it. And so they take to using their costly acquisition of foreign speech simply for purposes of diversion. They say, "*Wie befinden Sie sich*," or "*Comment vous portez-vous?*" where they might just as well say, "How are you?" and make no further use of their accomplishment. The simple truth is that the attainable results in this direction of teaching students in the class-room to speak a foreign language are so insignificant as to be utterly devoid of any practical value whatever, out in the world. And so there is no use in aiming at these results with reference to their commercial value, even if we were to admit the propriety of teaching subjects in school and college out of purely commercial considerations.

But what of the educational value of this acquisition? This is for us the really important question. I have spoken of its supposed commercial value only for the purpose of correcting what I deem a common misapprehension. I have tried to show that the smattering of conversational ability which the schools can impart is worthless on the market, and, conversely, that

the kind of ability which has a market value is beyond the reach of school training to impart. If we should attempt to impart it by quadrupling the time given to the study, and by devoting all our energies to teaching conversation, we should even then be coming into hopeless competition with other easier and more expeditious methods of acquiring the same thing. One who especially desired to learn to speak German could learn it so much better by living a few months in a German family. Furthermore, in this country, wherever a foreign population is numerous enough to make a knowledge of two languages commercially valuable, there are always a multitude of boys and girls growing up who are bilingual from childhood. They are usually numerous enough to fill all positions where their particular capacity is specially required. Who would pass by them to take up with the imperfect, unsatisfactory product of the schools ?

We must, therefore, it seems to me, admit that if the ability to speak a foreign language has any value that is within the reach of the schools, that value must be educational. How is it, then, with regard to this ? There is a wide-spread impression that the ability to speak a foreign language is in itself an important evidence of culture. It would appear as if this impression ought to correct itself when one sees how very many people there are in the world who can speak two or more languages with some fluency, and who are nevertheless without anything that can properly be called education. But the impression does not correct itself. People go on assuming that any person who can speak another tongue than his native one must have passed through a course of intellectual discipline proportionate in value to his fluency in speaking. In the minds of many, — and even of many who ought to know better, — fluency of speech is the only criterion by which to judge whether a course of study in a modern language has been profitable.

Now, all this is very erroneous. The ability to speak a for-

eign language is a matter of practice, not of intellectual discipline. Proficiency in the accomplishment depends simply upon the opportunity one has had, and the use one has made of his opportunity, for practice. It is a trick, a craft, a *technique*, quite comparable with the ability to telegraph, or to write short-hand. It has in itself only a very slight and a very low educational value. Suppose that an English-speaking boy some day learns at school that the German for "All men are mortal" is "*Alle Menschen sind sterblich.*" What has he added to his intellectual outfit? Nothing at all. He has simply got hold of a new set of symbols by which to communicate, if necessary, an idea that was already in his mind. From an educational point of view his acquisition is of the same order as if he had learned to tick off the English words on a telegraph instrument, to write them in short-hand, or to set them in type in a printing-office. But education deals with the getting of new ideas, with the enlargement of the mental horizon. The thought that I am here seeking to present finds a good illustration in the ease with which very young children learn to talk in a foreign language. If a member of this club, ignorant of German, were to go to Germany for a year's residence, and to take with him his three-year-old son; and if then he were to engage a teacher for himself, and work hard for a year, making use of all the expedients which are usually resorted to for the purpose of learning to speak German, meanwhile letting his son play at liberty about the house and street, he would find at the end of the year that he himself would be able to speak German in a halting, imperfect, unidiomatic, humiliating sort of way, which would betray his foreign extraction at every word. The little four-year-old, on the other hand, would use the language, so far as he needed to use language at all, just like a native. The reverse of this depressing picture is that upon returning home the child would, at the end of a second year, completely have lost his acquisition, while the father's would have suffered but little.

This furnishes us with the real argument against sending our children abroad, or putting them in the charge of foreign governesses, in order that they may learn to speak German and French in childhood. The accomplishment acquired with such ease by the little ones goes just as easily as it came when the opportunity for constant practice is withdrawn. The plan is a good one where the circumstances are such that one will have through life constant need and occasion to make use of the accomplishment acquired thus in infancy. Such circumstances exist in numerous European countries. For the graduates of our schools and colleges, however, circumstances of that kind do not exist. Even if we could in the schools accomplish far more than we really can in the way of imparting conversational ability, it would still not be worth while to make that our chief aim, since we should be perfectly sure that in a few years after leaving school our graduates would lose through lack of practice the accomplishment so laboriously acquired. It is, of course, no objection to a study that the learner is going to forget it, provided that the study has in itself an educational value, or lays a foundation upon which the learner can build further all through his after-life. If he fails to build, that is his own fault, and not that of his teacher or of his schooling. If he forgets what he knew after having once got an educational value out of it, what of it? Let him forget it. His forgetting is no sign that his former study was thrown away. There is a good deal of nonsense talked and written on that subject. But if the thing learned is without educational value in itself, is an accomplishment, a *technique* of the fingers or of the vocal organs, then it is obviously a very grave objection to the teaching of it, if we know that the learner will soon forget it through lack of practice. Who would think it good policy to go to the trouble and expense of teaching our students telegraphy or type-setting if it were certain that nine-tenths of them would soon forget the acquisition through lack of practice?

I conclude, then, that the educational value of learning to speak a foreign language is of itself very small. There can, however, be no doubt that language-study is one of the most potent educational instruments we know anything about. How is this? Where does this value lie, if not in learning to speak the language? Why, it lies in learning to read it. It lies in the deepening and broadening of the mind that come from the introduction to a new literature. It lies in the gradual working of one's way into the intellectual life of another people. It lies in the gradual taking up into one's own being of what has been thought and felt by the greatest of other lands and of other days. Or, along another line, it lies in the scientific study of the language itself, in the consequent training of the reason, of the powers of observation, comparison, and synthesis; in short, in the up-building and strengthening of the scientific intellect. There are hundreds of thousands of people in the world to-day who cannot converse at all in German, in French, in Latin, or in Greek, but whose intellectual debt to one or all of these languages is nevertheless simply inestimable. For myself, I can say with perfect sincerity that I look upon my own ability to speak German simply as an accomplishment to which I attach no great importance. If such a thing were possible I would sell it for money, and use the money to buy German books with; and it would not take an exorbitant price to buy it either. But, on the other hand, what I have got from my ability to read German, that is, my debt to the German genius through the German language, I would no more part with than I would part with my memories of the past, my hopes for the future, or any other integral portion of my soul.

Such being my views with regard to language-study and the source of its value, my views as to methods of teaching a language will follow of themselves. The teaching of a modern or of an ancient language in school or college should be thorough and scientific. It should have as its aim to acquaint

the learner with and fix in his mind the fundamental facts of the language and to introduce him to its literature. In this way a foundation will be laid for an acquirement which the learner can go on perfecting and making more and more useful to himself through all his after-life. He can be perfecting it not simply when he has a foreigner to talk with and to bore, but by himself in the privacy of home, wherever and whenever he can get a book to read. In the laying of this foundation a certain amount of colloquial practice is desirable. There are some things about a language that are needful to learn which can really be learned better and faster in this way than in any other. It is well to give some time to the memorizing of phrases, sentences, and idiomatic peculiarities, and to afford oral practice in the proper use of these. In no other way is a true feeling for the language, a proper *Sprachgefühl*, to be acquired. But this work should not be a mere empirical imitation of the teacher or of the book. It should appeal to the learner's intellect, as well as store his memory and discipline his vocal organs. Especially should it be treated not as itself the end of study but as a means to an end, that end being linguistic and literary scholarship.

# READING IN MODERN LANGUAGE STUDY.[1]

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It is with extreme diffidence that I offer to read a paper before this Association. My own teaching is done under conditions of such disadvantage, with students so poorly prepared and with results so unsatisfactory, that I cannot but feel how presumptuous it would be in me to attempt here to teach those who themselves teach under so much happier conditions and to so much better purpose than I can do. My sole apology might be an experience which, covering now three decades of language-teaching, has passed through many phases, both of our professional activity at large and of my own individual work. But these phases, for myself personally, have been rather renewals of effort and of disappointment than landmarks of progress or of triumph; and this experience, if I could recount it, might serve rather as a warning than as an example. So that it is as a seeker rather than as a giver that I come, to share my counsel with my more favored brethren; in order that by the confession of my own shortcomings, and especially by the criticism and discussion which this paper may elicit, I may be helped, and so perchance may help others, to find "the better way."

I am conscious, too, that my argument is addressed not so much to the members of this Association, who surely need no advice from me, as to a wider circle of humbler teachers who

[1] Read before the Modern Language Association of America, 1889, and reprinted with the permission of the author.

may be reached and perchance helped through this agency; as from the mountain-tops may be flashed beacon-lights to those who are laboring in the valleys below. I therefore recognize the fitness of the reference of this paper to the Pedagogical Section, which I hope may more and more engage hereafter the attention and sympathy of the Association.

In the stormier days of a controversy now happily abated, we have often heard the reproach made — some of us perhaps in our "fighting moods" have made it ourselves — against our brethren, the classical teachers, that the great majority of graduates wholly forget their Greek and Latin in after-life. Now, it might be answered that so ungracious a charge carries with it its own refutation. What a man has not learned he cannot unlearn, nor can he forget what he has never got. And if, under any old-time method of classical teaching, students did not learn Greek and Latin, but only learned *about them*, it is not strange that they should not know, or use, or love, these languages in later life. Yet, after all, and at the worst, this charge, if true, would not prove that the methods of even such classical study had failed to confer discipline and culture of life-long benefit, even when the Latin inflections, or the Greek alphabet itself, had been entirely forgotten. A far more serious matter it would be, however, if such a charge could be established against our modern languages. For, apart from all questions of method or of relative value in education, the modern languages, it seems, should at least be more *vital* — I mean in closer relation to our actual life; at least comparatively more for *use*, and less for discipline only; for the creation of new instruments of active power rather than for the mere training of faculty; for the manifold needs of a living present rather than for even the highest communion with the past. And if, under all these advantages, a like charge could be sustained against our department, it would be a far more serious imputation upon the value of our work, or at least upon the methods of our teaching.

Now it is precisely this charge which I find myself compelled to make, against myself at least, if not against others. I am fully aware of the disadvantages of my own teaching, and of the shortcomings of my own effort and performance; yet I cannot believe my experience to be wholly exceptional. Let me ask you to do as I have done again and again, to my sorrow. Try your graduates of five, ten, fifteen years ago. Ask them, as you meet them at commencement or elsewhere, how many, outside of professional scholars, "keep up" their French and German? How many still read these languages? How many love to read them, or would not prefer even a poor translation? How many use them as instruments of research or information? Into how many lives have they entered as an abiding presence of sweetness and light, the perpetual heritage of a new birth of intellectual liberty and power? Or, by how many have they been disused, laid aside, forgotten or used only to read a chance quotation, and remembered only as associated with college tasks and the fading "dream of things that were"?

This is a hard question — here perhaps an ungracious, and for me, it may be, an impertinent one. But I have been asking it for many years, and without gratifying answer. I want my colleagues to ask it, — if not of their graduates, at least to themselves; and to all who can answer "Not guilty," the argument of this paper does not apply. Yet, I regret to say, I fear that the great majority of all our graduates lay aside and forget their modern languages, after graduation, to a degree only less complete because these are perhaps less easy to forget, than do classical students lay aside and forget their Greek and Latin.

Now if this is true, even in any large degree, why is it true? The answer I believe is the same in both cases: because, instead of teaching modern languages, we spend so much of the limited time allowed us *in teaching only about them*, or in the unprofitable pursuit of false objects by false

methods; and thus, like the dog in the stream, snatching at the shadow, we lose the substance and the shadow too.

Whatever diverse views may be maintained as to the varied benefits of classical study, it will surely be admitted that the chief object of the study, say of French and German, is *to know French and German;* and that, for the vast majority of all our students, the chief object of knowing them is *to read them.*

I do not here include private instruction for special purposes or under special circumstances, but only such instruction as, seeking "the greatest good of the greatest number," should be regularly offered in the organized classes of our higher institutions of learning. And of this, too, I speak only within what may be called strictly collegiate limits, meaning thereby, in a word, such study as is *general* for large classes within definite courses, and not including the higher special — or more strictly university — study, whose highest law is *liberty.*

Now, it seems scarcely to need argument, that for this "greatest number" of all our modern language students, in school or college, the "greatest good" that our teaching can confer is the *power to read,* with — so far as possible — the *love of reading.* I think this is sufficiently indicated in the definition adopted by this Association, of the "primary aims" of such instruction: first, "literary culture;" and then, "philological scholarship and linguistic discipline." My contention is, that that which is here placed first is not only first, but is by far the most important, and should have far more attention, relatively, than I believe it now usually receives.

What is the kind of reading which this "literary culture" implies? In the first place, it must be accurate reading; for without accuracy there can be no thorough intelligence and, of course, no genuine literary culture. And this accuracy implies sound grammatical knowledge, and precise, often minute, grammatical criticism. But beyond that, and far beyond

that, it must be reading which by practice has grown to be not only intelligent, accurate, appreciative, but easy and pleasurable: it must be "Reading without Tears." That literature which must be spelled out with grammar and dictionary is, for the nonce, not literature at all; and will surely not be read, after graduation, outside of professional circles. My point is, *we do not read enough:* it is not quality, but quantity; not depth, but range; not knowledge only, but the ease of practised habit, that is left lacking in our results. Speaking not from my own unsatisfactory experience only, but judging so far as I can from the courses outlined in many of our foremost institutions, we do not read enough, not nearly enough, to secure that easy command of the foreign idiom and vocabulary, that comfortable at-homeness in the foreign atmosphere, which is necessary for the appreciation of style, for the enjoyment of literature, or for the free and glad use of these languages as instruments of research, of culture, or of power in after life. Hence it follows that in the modern languages, as in Greek and Latin, yet with far more lamentable loss, reading is after graduation for the most part abandoned and forgotten; and French and German, begun in school and continued in college as *tasks*, are remembered and avoided as tasks in after-life. That reading, I repeat, which must be done as a task, or with any distinct consciousness of the difficulty of a foreign idiom, will not be done at all outside of professional objects. And so it is that the French and German literatures, with all their wealth, all their "promise and potency" of culture, of delight, of inspiration, of power, remain a dead letter in the lives of the vast majority of all our college graduates. If this is not true, I fain would be corrected; but I fear it is only too true.

If, then, this is true, the remedy is that we must read more, and give more prominence to reading, relatively, in our courses of study. And if this be recognized as the supremely important object to which all others are secondary, we must, per-

force, within our limited time, subordinate other objects to which large proportions of time and attention, though of course in varying degrees, are now habitually devoted. Among them I will briefly mention: —

### I. THE FORMAL STUDY OF GRAMMAR.

This cannot, of course, be wholly eliminated, but it should be reduced to a minimum. The grammar should be for the reading, not the reading for the grammar. Reading outside of grammar should be begun at the earliest possible day, with all needful helps; and the further accretion of grammatical knowledge should be made to crystallize gradually around easy, interesting, and pleasurable reading. The formal learning of paradigms and rules may thus, I believe, be wholly omitted, except in largest outlines. Nothing *vitalizes* language study like reading, even the simplest, outside of grammar rules. I remember a boy who, after a year of grammatical study of Latin on the old plan in school, came during vacation under the teaching of his sister, a bright Virginia girl, who knew nothing of the scholastic method: before the end of the first week he exclaimed, "Golly, sister! I believe this means something" — a commentary only too true upon much of our grammar grinding. If I might add a word of personal experience, it would be that year by year, though yet far from attaining my ideal, I am more and more impressed with the importance of *minimizing* formal grammar study. One month of indispensable introduction I believe to be quite sufficient. After that, so far as possible, the grammar, like the dictionary, should be used as a book of reference rather than of formal study. (I might add, that the best grammars for this kind of work remain yet to be written.) The reading, thus early begun, should be pushed more and more; the formal grammar, more and more subordinated. I should not need to add that at this stage all points of technical learning, — etymology, language-history, etc., except for occasional *help*, should

be wholly omitted. Yet right here lies our temptation. It is so easy to waste time in displaying our own erudition; so pleasant to astonish or amuse our pupils; so hard to forget ourselves for their sake: so easy, in a word, to be a scholar, so hard to be a teacher!

### II. EXERCISES IN SPEAKING.

On this point I shall say but little. I fear I shall in some quarters be deemed guilty of high treason if I express my conviction of the utter worthlessness of such exercises in our ordinary college work. Of course, along with the tongue, the ear must be trained to an accurate pronunciation, and to the appreciation of the beauty and rhythm of the original; for without this there is no language, much less literature. It is important, also, to be able to understand what may be added, for illustration or explanation, in the original tongue. But as for learning to speak in the college class-room, the idea is futile, and all the time devoted thereto is almost utterly wasted. Given a class, say of twenty-five to thirty members, with three or four hours a week, — that is five or ten minutes for each individual, — and all, meanwhile, reading, writing, speaking, thinking, dreaming English for all the remaining hours of day or night, and their power of intelligent speech in French or German would be trivial and futile, less than "a younger brother's revenue," even if every moment of time throughout the college course could be devoted to such exercises, to the exclusion of all other instruction. The result would be to leave the student, in the language of Professor Hewitt, "the proud possessor of a few sentences, but without any literary knowledge;" or, as I have myself elsewhere said, "with one phrase on almost every subject, and hardly two on any." Whatever may be said for the so-called "natural method" with individual pupils, or in private classes taught under special conditions for special objects (and here its merits may be great), yet for collegiate or even school work

proper it is "a delusion and a snare." Who among us has not witnessed the helplessness of pupils trained by this method for all literary or higher linguistic work? The conditions necessary for its usefulness are simply not practicable in the ordinary classes of the school or college.

### III. WRITTEN COMPOSITION.

Here the weight of prescription and of authority would seem to be so overwhelming as to render criticism at once impotent if not impertinent. Yet we should not forget that this prescription comes to us through the Latin, and from an age when the writing of Latin was the necessary accomplishment of every educated person; nor that it is now less than a generation since the like prescription in England still insisted upon the writing of Latin *verse:* so hard it is to lay aside the leading-strings of a past culture, even after we have outgrown its infancy. I would not question the indispensableness of writing to the mastery, or indeed even to the accurate criticism, of language; still less would I claim that the highest scholarship in French or German could be attained without the ability to write, or even to speak, these languages. Yet for how many of us does this "highest scholarship" come within the remotest horizon of our teaching? How many of all our pupils do we expect to learn, by our exercises, to write French and German with any true command of language, much less of style; or, indeed, with anything beyond the most barren grammatical correctness? But even within this limit, and far short of any real power of expression, all must admit the value of writing to confirm the knowledge and use of the grammatical forms; to teach the force of words, the value of position, structure, emphasis, etc.: so that, even for thorough grammatical training, exercise in writing — I will not say *composition* — may fairly be claimed to be indispensable. This I do not deny; my protest is against the abuse, not the use, of this exercise.

I insist, *first*, that it is begun too early. To set a pupil to writing Latin or German who knows nothing of reading is as unnatural and cruel as it is unprofitable. It reverses the natural order of acquisition, and makes the beginner's path, which should be lightened by every helpful device, literally a pathway of tears. Such exercise should be reserved until by actual use the student has acquired some considerable knowledge of word-form, structure, and idiom; or, at the very least, until a review, after the first study of the grammar. Then, as my boy said above, it may "mean something," and so become really intelligent and helpful.

*Secondly*, I contend that it is often made unduly difficult and burdensome, not only by being too early begun, but by being exaggerated beyond its proper importance, as though it were an end unto itself, instead of being regarded — what it really should be — as a help to easier and more accurate reading.[1] At present I think I do not exaggerate when I say that this exercise is generally made to occupy from one-third to one-half, often even more, of the time given to the study of language, ancient or modern; and that by unreasonable methods of instruction and of correction it is made also, to both pupil and teacher, by far the most painful and discouraging as well as unprofitable part of the work. It would be a great gain for progress, as well as for peace and comfort, if this exercise could be restricted within narrower limits of time, and placed in its due subordination to the higher objects of reading and criticism. To a very large extent, indeed, its purposes can be better accomplished, with less loss of time, by writing from *oral dictation* — which gives, besides, the needful training of the ear, as of the attention, for the understand-

1 I beg leave here to refer to the excellent essay of Professor Hale of the University of Chicago, on "The Art of Reading Latin" (Ginn & Co.), which, though intended for classical teachers only, may be almost equally helpful in the teaching of modern languages. I make this reference the more freely because I cannot fully claim the weight of this high authority in favor of all the points of the present paragraph.

ing of the spoken language. The time that may here be saved, in my opinion without loss, should also be devoted to the supreme object of more and better reading. Indeed, I will go further, and venture to add that, in courses which are necessarily elementary in scope, it would be a wise economy to omit composition altogether.

### IV. SUBJECTS OF HIGHER OR SPECIAL STUDY.

The foregoing remarks include subjects and methods appropriate mainly to the school and the lower classes of the college. What I shall now briefly add concerns rather the higher or university study. I refer to those subjects which I suppose to be included by this Association in its definition, — "philological scholarship and linguistic discipline," in addition to "literary culture." Under these heads may perhaps be roughly enumerated: scientific grammar, phonetics, etymology, special and comparative, language-history, with study of older forms and kindred dialects, textual criticism, the details of literary history, and so forth. Let no one suppose that I undervalue the importance of these things, however much I may regret my own shortcomings in the learning or teaching of them. They are the crown of our discipline, giving to it the dignity of a many-sided and ample science, and touching at many points the highest intellectual and moral interests of man. My only contention is, that these should be mainly reserved for that higher study which should be made rather the privilege of the few than the task of the many; for the higher classes only, in our collegiate work; more properly and more largely for post-graduate or university students: best of all, for that *seminary* work so admirably outlined by Professor White of Cornell at Philadelphia in 1887, yet which I do not believe to be practicable, or even desirable, within ordinary collegiate limits. The scope of the subjects here included is so large and so important that they press with overwhelming weight upon lower classes, not yet

fully prepared for such study; and for this very reason there is danger lest they should prematurely usurp the lion's share of that limited and precious time now available for our courses. Such topics — of more distinctly scientific import, linguistic or philological — should, therefore, be mainly reserved for later study, or introduced into the earlier by glimpses only; for illumination and inspiration, rather than as an added burden of work. I make this plea, as I think, in the interest alike of the higher and of the lower study; to leave the latter free for the pursuit of its immediate and more important object, and to secure for the former the groundwork of an adequate preparation. The premature or excessive introduction of these topics into early study is one of the most dangerous temptations of our scholarship, and is, in my opinion, the chief reason why so many of our students leave college not only unable to read French and German with any intelligent appreciation or pleasure, but already wearied and alienated by such a mistaken study not of, but about them.[1] Such students are little likely to return to these languages with any zest in later life.

I claim, then, that far more largely than is now usually the case, the chief work of our school and college courses in modern languages should be reading, — large, intelligent, pleasurable, sympathetic reading (which must, of course, also be

[1] It is certainly true, as urged by the *Nation* in its review of President Lowell's address before this Association, that literature and language are equally worthy objects of study, and indeed, in their highest conception, are *one*. But this does not touch the argument of the present paper, which concerns only the relative weight that should be assigned to each in the (purely preparatory) work of the great body of our students. It is also true, as stated in another column of the same issue of the *Nation*, that the great mass of college graduates do not keep up the reading even of good *English* literature, — as, indeed, they do not keep up any branch of college study. But this is because they do not choose to do so, not because they cannot; they at least use English books for all needed purposes of help or information. I contend that they do not as a rule, even to this extent, use French or German, — and because they *cannot* — at least except as a difficult and disagreeable task. The question here *is*, moreover, something more than one of degree only.

careful and accurate reading); and that our chief object should be, for this main body of our students, to endow them with the power so to read these languages that they shall love to read them, not as a task but as a privilege, and with the delight of literary insight and sympathy, for all the uses of culture and of service, as they would read their mother tongue. And in order to impart this power, and, when possible, to kindle this love, I contend that, just so far as may be necessary, all other objects or methods should be subordinated. How far such subordination may be necessary is, of course, a question of circumstances and conditions, for which I should be the last to propose any unvarying rule. Such questions of practical pedagogy, like all other questions of intellectual or moral duty, are at last *personal* questions, which every man must decide for himself.

Finally, as to the method of this reading, believing that in details each man must make his own methods, I will only remark that it should be, first, *for translation.* It is vain to decry this exercise, which is one of the most valuable in the whole range of education. Translation, clear, accurate, simple, adequate yet idiomatic, is not only the best test of the knowledge of both idioms, but it is a work of art as well as of science (and, as our President has said, of *conscience* too), disciplining the highest powers of insight, skill, and taste, both in thought and in expression. As a training in the mother tongue, it is superior to all the devices of rhetoric. President Eliot has somewhere said, though in other and better words, that the power rightly to understand and to use the mother tongue is the consummate flower of all education. So we should not debar our study of modern languages from this high ministry, for which it is so conspicuously fitted. There is no other discipline incident to language-study so valuable as translation rightly conceived; yet there is nothing more harmful than those miserable verbal paraphrases which, under the utterly false name of "literal translation,"

are so often not only allowed but required.[1] Such method is false alike to the foreign and to the native language. Only *idiom* can translate *idiom*, or *style* translate *style*. And if it be urged that no translation can be fully adequate, I answer that no otherwise can this truth be so sharply taught, or so deeply felt, as by the effort to reproduce the perfect forms of a foreign literature in our own language: —it is only by doing *our best* that we can truly conceive the ideal and the unattainable. We must insist, also, that for this American people there is only one mother tongue, to which all other languages are alike foreign, and to be studied as such, by its norms and largely, too, for its sake. It were better that our students should never know other languages than use them to debauch their English. I insist, then, upon the prime necessity and value of good translation, within appropriate limits.

But, secondly, it is equally clear that our students should, finally, learn to read *without translation*. No one has ever truly *read* any foreign literature who has read it only through a translation — his own or any other. At best such reading is only at second hand, and, in the work of our students, is usually very imperfect. Translation is essential at first, as is the scaffolding to the building of a house; but no house is finished or sightly until the scaffolding is removed. So, no reading is adequate until it can be understood at first hand, and in the form of the original. In other words, the student must learn to think and to feel, if not productively, at least receptively, in and through the foreign language. Then only can he truly know or feel its literature. How this transformation shall be accomplished, at what stage begun, by

[1] Since the above was written, I have seen an amusing description of an old-time teacher who, in the lines of Horace, Epod. II., 31: —

> "Aut trudit acres hinc et hinc multa cane
> Apros in obstantes plagas,"

insisted that *multa cane* should be rendered (literally!) *with much dog*. Some of my colleagues in the Association may be surprised to learn that this style is by no means yet confined to the "rural districts."

what methods promoted, is one of the most important questions of our pedagogy.[1] Suffice it to say, that it implies a new birth of intellectual power, and that without it the best results of language-study are impossible.

*What to read* was twenty to thirty years ago a question of supply. Now, thanks to the intelligent zeal of our publishers, it is a question of selection. Such selection might, however, be much aided, for remote and less-experienced teachers, if the publishers' catalogues gave generally, as is already done in some cases, a careful description of the *kind* of each edition; whether for primary, intermediate, or advanced work. Besides this there is only one remark of so general application as to justify mention here. This is, that beyond books intended for the very earliest use, editions with vocabularies, except such as are special or technological, are not to be commended. These vocabularies, unless very elaborate, and then expensive, are apt to be incomplete, or at least limited in scope. But even the best is only a poor substitute for a good dictionary, the essential feature being, usually, that the student is helped to the required meaning, instead of having to select it for himself. Such spoon-diet is proper only as "milk for babes." Beyond babyhood, the student should be trained to the right use of the dictionary, as well as of the grammar and other sources of information. This remark has seemed to be justified here by the increasing number of such *labor-saving* editions "with vocabulary."

And now, having detained you already too long, I ask to be indulged in a few words more. During more than twenty years of active work as a teacher of modern languages, I have seen our profession pass through many phases. At first we were fighting for a bare recognition in the scheme of liberal study. This victory won, we had then to witness the war of

[1] Again I take the liberty of referring to Professor Hale's "Essay on the Art of Reading Latin," which I most gladly commend to all teachers of modern language.

"methods," until we are now, I trust, happily past that stage of our progress. As I review the scene of so much discussion and experiment, and look forward to the bright promise of the new day, which I have lived to welcome, if not to enjoy, there seem to me to be two tendencies — two remaining perils — on which I may be permitted to add a word of experience and of warning. The first is the *bread-and-butter* theory. This, I hope, may be here briefly dismissed. Bread is indispensable, and butter, however thin, is to most of us a very acceptable addition. But these are not recognized by this Association, and should not be recognized by ourselves professionally, as among the primary and direct objects of our work. However the learning of modern languages may be made to serve this necessary and worthy purpose in private classes, in summer schools, or under other arrangements for special objects, we must see to it that such views shall not usurp a leading place in our institutions of higher learning. In the purview of our teaching, the life must be more than meat, and the body more than raiment. On this point, I am sure, it is not necessary here to insist.

The danger which I more fear, just now, comes from the opposite direction — from the excess of what I cannot better describe than as *erudition in the school room.* I refer to the tendency — I fear the growing tendency — to obtrude the methods and requirements of erudite or special study into our elementary teaching and text-books. This may be at present only a wholesome reaction from former more trivial methods — the lustiness of a giant only lately liberated from chains; but it indicates a peril which, if not arrested by sound reason, will be hurtful alike to the thoroughness and to the modesty of true scholarship. The field of this danger lies less within the scope of this Association than in the lower schools; but the warning, if at all justified, is not the less appropriate here, because to the members of this Association the humbler teachers will naturally look for the standards as well as the instru-

ments of their work. The time was, and not very long ago, when we made this reproach against the classicists. Yet now, by strange reaction, we see them seeking, more and more, better and more reasonable methods, and producing easier and more teachable text-books; while we, on our part, seem to be hastening to occupy the cloudy eminence which they are wisely trying to vacate. In this tendency I see a real danger to modern language study. In the pride of a triumphant scholarship we forget the requirements of a reasonable pedagogy; or, from the standpoint of another native tongue, we forget or ignore the needs of the English pupil; — or we fail clearly to draw the line between the critical work of the advanced student and the wants of the untrained beginner. I see these indications in some of our modern books; and I must infer that they exist also in many of our class-rooms. I do not by any means despise erudition, or critical scholarship, or critical teaching; but they have their place, as they have their value. We must draw the line clearly and broadly, in our editing as well as in our teaching, between advanced and elementary work; or we shall soon have no good school books, and no good schools. If by the premature and injudicious obtrusion of learned methods or results we make the beginnings of modern language study harsh and repulsive, we shall undermine the foundations of our discipline, and shall then vainly attempt to build any worthy superstructure. Let us resist the temptations of intellectual pride. Let us remember that in teaching, if anywhere, *ars est celare artem;* — that the highest triumph of erudition, in the school book or in the school room, is in the most masterful helpfulness; and that he who would lead the children of knowledge, as of faith, must himself become as a little child.

# THE NATURAL METHOD.[1]

PROFESSOR W. T. HEWETT, CORNELL UNIVERSITY.

The advocates of the "natural" method of teaching modern languages have apparently captured the citadel of the argument by the name which they have chosen for their system, and the question arises, — What is the natural method of teaching or acquiring language?

The answer is: "Learn a language as a child learns its mother tongue." If this statement embodies the essence of this mode of instruction, we must ask what is the process by which a child learns to speak? It is surrounded by the speech of its country. There is no blurring or obscuring of impressions: one sound and only one is associated with every object or action. The child assigns a certain meaning to a tone of the voice before it knows a single word. By the application of certain sounds to particular things it learns the names of persons and of objects. By repetition memory fixes the sound as the representative of an idea. Words of description introduce the notion of quality, of good and bad, of color, heat, and size. Verbs of incomplete predication, and picture-words, give the idea of actions, and the relations of substance and quality. The conception of time follows, and adverbs indicate the mode of verbal action. Nouns as the objects of verbs and prepositions follow. The child passes from the generic to the specific, from applying a single term to all animals, to discriminating the characteristics of each.

[1] Reprinted from the *Academy*, Dec. 1886, with the permission of the publisher.

Terms descriptive of physical objects are broadened in meaning to have a secondary and spiritual signification. Many expressions in the vocabulary of both the child and the man have been learned without even truly analyzing them. Stereotyped, hereditary forms are adopted without any conscious mental action. This is, in brief, the process of the child's development in language in its own home and country. But the condition of pupils who begin the study of a foreign language in this country is different. They already possess a vocabulary fixed in the memory ; every word suggests at once an object or action or quality. The mind is full of the images of things. The steps of the child's development cannot be repeated exactly in later study. The process must be different, — new names must be associated with familiar things; terms in part arbitrary and in part natural must be acquired, so that they come at command at the sight of the object; or kindred words in a changed form must be learned. The child must at the same time retain and constantly use all its former store of words. It cannot be transported into a foreign world for more than an hour or two a day, or a few hours a week. The years through which a child grows into the life and spirit of its mother tongue, attaining even then but a limited vocabulary, cannot be repeated. More rapid results are possible, and methods corresponding to the awakened powers of the child must be employed.

The "natural" method, strictly followed, would require that all instruction should be oral, by objects and by forms presented to the eye. But in advanced instruction we cannot stop here; other methods must be employed to keep pace with the mind's expansion and its developed powers. We should ignore most important methods of training in use in the acquisition of other branches of knowledge, if we stopped with the oral, or "natural" method. That method is alone natural which takes cognizance of a pupil's surroundings, his purposes in life, his object in acquiring the language, and his

intellectual capabilities in learning. The mind generalizes; the principles of language admit of condensed statement; the facts must be grouped in rules which enunciate the usages of the language, if they are to be retained. Systematic grammar is necessary, and language must be studied as the embodiment of thought, the philosophy of expression, in order to secure the highest culture. The mode in which a thought is conceived, the subtle influence of particles, prefixes, and suffixes, must form a part of the training in language. Language thus studied affords a valuable discipline, and indirectly prepares the way for the study of logic and philosophy.

What is natural at one period of life is not natural, in the sense of being adapted, to all periods of study. The scholar of disciplined mind who seeks to master a language by the natural method alone, would make limited progress. The gift of generalization, of comparison of forms, and of insight into kindred words, would be sacrificed by adopting the method of the child. The scientific method of teaching language requires that all the powers should be enlisted in the work. Hence any exclusive system will fail to accomplish the highest results, and will overlook essential facts of intellectual growth. That method which evokes all the powers of the pupil's mind is the best; the ear, the voice, and the eye must alike be taught, and this triple object must be kept in view throughout the course. Analogy is a suggestive and ever-active principle in the acquisition of language; and a knowledge of related words, inflections, and principles in one language facilitates the mastery of every other. A knowledge of Latin is a key to the attainment of all the Romance languages; but only a clear and comprehensive knowledge of its words and forms will facilitate an acquaintance with the derivative tongues. A superficial, speaking knowledge of German does not contribute to the knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and of English speech, while a scientific knowledge is a most valuable aid. A defect of the so-called "natural" method is

that it appeals to the memory exclusively, and, unless supplemented by other methods, leaves the student with a bare knowledge of the idioms taught, but destitute of the principles and analogies of the language, beyond those imparted by oral practice. Students so taught are often deficient in a systematic knowledge of the inflections, and their subsequent progress is less thorough than that of pupils who have been trained by established methods.

The culture of the memory alone never made a great scholar: a knowledge of several languages learned familiarly where they are spoken, fails in itself to give intellectual culture. The knowledge of German possessed by the children of German parents, born in this country, is often an obstacle to the thorough study of their native tongue. A facility in phrases is often accompanied by a real failure to discriminate properly the meaning of words in English. Those delicate distinctions in thought existing in a language are often lost in the case of students to whom both languages are alike. One language seems to displace the other, as Hamerton holds, and to make the possessor insensible to subtle shades of meaning. Even in the case of great scholars who seem to know equally the language and literature of two nations, the idioms of one language are often transferred unconsciously to the other. If we examine the results achieved by American students who have resided abroad, we are confirmed in our view of the limited value of the acquisition of a language mainly by intercourse, without thorough systematic study. Many who have taken a degree at a foreign university, and mingled intimately with the people, but who have devoted themselves to pursuits other than the language itself, have acquired only an uncertain facility in speaking and writing. If this is the case with students who have resided abroad, being daily in a foreign atmosphere, hearing in lectures and conversation only the language of the country, it is true by a stronger reasoning of pupils in this country who enjoy but an hour or two of

instruction per day in a foreign language, and speak and write and think the remainder of the time in English. Students study the modern languages mainly for an acquaintance with the literature ; the time which can be devoted to it is limited. If all the available time were consumed in studying by the oral method, a knowledge of the literature, and the discipline which comes from thorough study of the language, would be lost. A teacher who employed exclusively the oral method would fail to call into exercise some of the highest powers of the pupil, and the results would be meagre and unsatisfying. The oral method should be assigned to its true place. It is an important and valuable aid in training the ear to understand the spoken language, and the organs of speech to pronounce correctly. Translation at hearing is an admirable accompaniment of linguistic instruction, and should be practised constantly in the study of language. If familiar explanations and lectures in the language itself are given, it will form a useful auxiliary to any course.

It is fallacious to hope to impart to all students the ability to speak a foreign language fluently. Few would have occasion to use the language if acquired. It is therefore unwise to insist upon a speaking knowledge as the end of the study. It is a valuable aid in the mastery of grammatical forms, and a key to a facile acquaintance with the literature. Indeed, a true appreciation of poetry, as well as its expression, is impossible without the *feeling* which comes from an inner knowledge of the spirit as well as of the sounds of the language.

The manifest merit of the natural method should not be obscured by the exclusive claim that it is a substitute for, and should displace other recognized and approved systems of instruction. As an accompaniment of higher study, it will perform a useful and possibly indispensable office.

These notes are simply what they are called, — notes of the writer's experience in teaching French. The methods suggested for the various parts of the work may not be the best; they can certainly be improved on; but they have proved fruitful of good results, and have been adopted by some other teachers with equal success.

# NOTES ON THE TEACHING OF FRENCH.

BY PROFESSOR F. C. DE SUMICHRAST, HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

IN GENERAL; THE TEACHER; PRONUNCIATION; GROUND-WORK; SIGHT-READING; COMPOSITION; MEMORIZING; DICTATION; SPEAKING FRENCH; CONVERSATION CLASSES; CLASSIC WRITERS.

## IN GENERAL.

Few changes in education are more striking than the growth and development of the study of modern languages. The time has long since gone by when Latin was practically the only medium of intercommunication between learned men in different branches of knowledge; when philosophers, theologians, and scientists made use of the language of Cicero to communicate to each other their discoveries or their opinions. A common language does not at present exist; whether it ever will do so is a question which may be left out of consideration for the moment. It is plain that, with the strong patriotic feeling exhibited by the great nations of the world, neither English, German, nor French will be universally accepted as the language of general intercourse. A student of the present day who desires to be thoroughly equipped, must therefore possess more than an elementary knowledge; he must have a good command of those foreign languages in which so many and so valuable works have been and are being produced.

This alone, to say nothing of the splendor of French literature in past centuries, must compel attention to the importance

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of the methods employed in teaching the language. The old system of spending a very long time in picking out, word by word, the sense of a short passage, selected generally from a somewhat tedious and uninteresting work, — tedious and uninteresting precisely because it was not studied or treated in the way that its merits demanded, — could not possibly induce men to pursue their studies with anything like the enthusiasm that must be excited if rapid and satisfactory progress is to be made.

To know French, — and in these notes it is French simply that will be treated of, — to know French is not simply to be acquainted with the elements of the grammar, and to have read, with more or less trouble and difficulty, one or two texts selected from the many treasures which the literature of France possesses; but it is to have a real acquaintance with the genius and forms of the language; to penetrate into the spirit of the literature; to become familiar with the modes of thought and the manner of expressing them; to feel, in a word, that instead of a hesitating progress, such as that of a child tottering in his walk, one's onward march is firm and decided as that of the grown man who presses forward to a distinct, clearly defined goal.

There are, broadly speaking, two ways in which the study of the French language may be conducted. The one which has just been alluded to consists in minute and over-careful attention to every detail from the very outset, demanding an accurate comprehension of every point as it comes up. This method assumes that in the acquisition of the French language the intellect is capable of doing what it absolutely refuses to do in any other branch of knowledge. In none would it find it possible to grasp at once, fully and completely, and to retain permanently, every detail as it presents itself.

The other method is intended to lead the student to an acquaintance with the language, such as that of the child when

it first begins to learn words, to distinguish things, and to give them names. The idea which underlies this theory is a captivating one. Its very simplicity attracts sympathy and approval, and at first sight it seems as though it were the one right and proper mode of imparting a knowledge of the French tongue in a manner which will be at once agreeable and effectual. It is not, however, capable of fulfilling all that is claimed for or expected of it. The child learning to lisp its own mother tongue is a different being intellectually from the student whose mind has been more or less thoroughly trained, and who is capable of very much greater effort; who understands the value of time; who is anxious to progress; who wishes to become master of the language in as short a time as possible.

Any system which aims at thorough teaching of French, which seeks to combine simplicity of method with accuracy of knowledge and rapidity of grasp, cannot leave out of sight the facts that the grammar bears a most important relation to the language; that the literature is, after all, the one great treasure-house which must be opened to the student; that the best teachers will be the great writers, classical and modern; that the student's vocabulary will be most usefully and most rapidly enlarged by the perusal of numerous works by the best authors.

Another point is, that precisely the same course cannot be followed in its entirety with every learner. Purposes are different. Some may wish to acquire simply reading knowledge; others to add to this some slight conversational facility, to be developed subsequently by residence in France, or intercourse with French people. Others, again, are anxious to make a thorough study of the language, and to become fully acquainted with its resources and riches.

Taking, then, the grammar as the basis of the work, the question arises, How should that grammar be taught? The use of a text-book becomes a necessity, and of text-books

there is, of course, no end. Admirable grammars in the French language are to be had quite easily. Very good grammars written in English, Methods or Courses of greater or less excellence, to say nothing of the very numerous books which are mere collections of clippings from other works — are ready to the hand; and it would seem as though every possible system had been tried by which an acquisition of the elements of the language might be facilitated. And yet, while recognizing the value of many books which have become standard in educational institutions, teachers and students alike are forced to recognize the fact that of all the grammars or methods published, there is not yet one the author of which has grasped the principle which must underlie any grammatical text-book intended to be used by Americans or Englishmen in the study of French. The general plan of the grammars, properly so called, is simply that on which grammars written for French pupils are constructed. Chapters on the article, the substantive, the adjective, the pronoun, the verb, the adverb, the preposition, the conjunction, and the interjection, follow each other in regular procession, as a preface to that body of rules which, with its not infrequent exceptions, forms the French syntax. The Methods do not, as a rule, conform strictly to this arrangement, although they also begin with that old friend, the article, which, from being placed in the very fore front of the instruction, assumes an importance which certainly should never have belonged to it; a fact so well recognized by students in general, that they very speedily forget all they learned about the combinations of the article and the preposition, and even when far advanced in their studies continue to translate literally "of the" and "to the" by *de le*, *à le*, *de les* and *à les*. A further fault of Methods, probably inseparable from the plan, is that a certain difficulty is experienced in referring to particular rules required to elucidate difficulties which must constantly present themselves to an English-speaking student.

The fact that it is English-speaking people who are to be taught the French language, gives the key to the true method of teaching.

This will be better understood, perhaps, by an illustration taken from actual practice in teaching.

A constant stumbling-block to English-speaking students is the agreement of the article and adjective with the substantive in French. *Theoretically*, the rule is alike in both languages; *practically*, there is nothing in English to show the agreement. In other words, the substantive in French has a *visible* effect upon article and adjective; it has *none* in English. This is an important difference, which must be taught at the outset; and the plan adopted by the writer is as follows: —

On the blackboard are written two English substantives: —

*Boy.* *Girl.*

and the class informs the teacher that the first is masculine singular, and the second feminine singular.

Below each is then written the French word: —

*Garçon.* *Fille.*

and the class is then asked to supply a definite article for each noun: —

*The boy.* *The girl.*

Attention is at once drawn to the fact that the *form* of the article is identical in each case; then the French comes: —

*The boy,* *The girl,*
*Le garçon.* *La fille.*

A difference in *form;* impossible to mistake one for the other. Add an adjective, say "good:" —

*The good boy.* *The good girl.*

No difference in the *form* of the adjective, any more than in that of the article; but note the French: —

| | |
|---|---|
| *The good boy,* | *The good girl,* |
| *Le bon garçon.* | *La bonne fille.* |

Here again the adjective changes its form and clearly indicates the gender.

Now comes number. The rule in both languages is alike: add *s* for the plural (exceptions disregarded at the outset); so: —

| | |
|---|---|
| *Boys,* | *Girls,* |
| *Garçons.* | *Filles.* |

Add first the article and next the adjective, and the English shows no change whatever in these words, although they are plural; but the French plainly indicates difference in gender and number: —

| | |
|---|---|
| *The good boys,* | *The good girls,* |
| *Les bons garçons.* | *Les bonnes filles.* |

The fact can now be, *is* now impressed upon the student that the agreement of the article and the adjective with the substantive means something *visible* in French, — an operation to be performed; a change to be effected. And the lesson is repeated with the possessive adjective, the demonstrative, the interrogative, and, again, with the pronoun, whether personal, possessive, demonstrative, or relative; and the idea sinks into the mind and stays there.

This is not a grammar, or a method either, else it would be proper to show how many points can thus be made clear and striking. Besides, they will readily occur to any one familiar with both tongues and teaching them. The supposedly terrible French "irregular" verb can be stripped of its terrors even more emphatically.

The grammar of the language must be learned in conjunction with as large a number as possible of words in common use, in

order to form a vocabulary by means of which the student will in a comparatively short space of time be enabled not merely to read ordinary French with facility but to translate English into French, and, at no distant time, to express directly in French the thoughts which he wishes to utter. The two languages, English and French, are not only dissimilar in their origin; they are essentially distinct in their genius and modes of expression. What is important in the one is less so in the other. The English-speaking student employs, naturally, the modes of thought and of expression which he has learned from childhood, and these differ so greatly from the French that, unless the fact is borne in mind constantly in the course of teaching, it is not French that will be given, but a bastard dialect which has nothing whatever to recommend it save an occasional quaint turn or absurd mistranslation.

To teach French as it should be taught necessarily involves on the part of the teacher a thorough knowledge of both tongues. How else is he to seize the characteristic points of each, and to present them clearly and definitely, so that they may be readily grasped by the intelligence of his students? The object, then, is to dwell less upon those points of grammar which are alike in the two languages, than to impress strongly the differences, so that the characteristic features of the language will be thoroughly learned, and become part and parcel of the intellectual stock-in-trade of the student, which he can call upon readily at any time without fear of becoming obscure or unintelligible. This is the very basis of successful teaching which aims at bringing on a pupil rapidly, while grounding him thoroughly. Every part of the work may be turned to advantage in this respect; not merely those grammatical exercises which are necessary to impress upon the mind the particular points they illustrate, but such spoken sentences, such ordinary expressions, as may, and indeed should, be used from the outset to accustom the ear and the understanding alike to the different language which it is seeking to acquire.

And also the reading of French itself, which should never be made an unpleasant, ungrateful task, involving an amount of labor which simply destroys any possible interest in the work itself, — not that French, any more than anything else, can be acquired without labor and difficulty; but what is meant is that mere labor for labor's sake should not be allowed to prevail in the system pursued; that it should be definitely kept in view that the work is to bring results encouraging to the student; for no matter how excellent the teacher, how thoroughly equipped, how interesting in his illustrations, how clear and precise in his expressions, it is not he who is to acquire the language, it is not he who can put it into the mind of the learner, but it is that learner who must by his own work make himself the possessor of the stores of knowledge presented to him.

### THE TEACHER.

It has been said above that "to teach French as it should be taught necessarily involves on the part of the teacher a thorough knowledge of both tongues." This point is worth considering a little more fully.

Macaulay says, in effect, that no man can ever acquire a foreign language perfectly; experience proves the contrary. It is possible to know two languages thoroughly, and, given a good "ear," to pronounce in both accurately. But perfect pronunciation of the language to be taught is a necessity; one may sin in English, but not in French. Here is a difficulty in the way of American teachers; a serious one. Here is now a difficulty in the way of foreign born teachers, — imperfect knowledge of English, and consequent confusion in explanations given in that tongue.

Which is the better, then, the American or the French born teacher? The odds are now, and always will be, in favor of the latter, provided he knows English well, so as to understand the spirit of the language, and to make plain, quite plain,

his meaning when, perforce, his explanations must be given in English. But if an American has really mastered French, and by a residence abroad has succeeded in speaking it fluently and pronouncing it correctly, he is the equal of the Frenchman for all that part of the work which does not include literature. The spirit of the literature is not to be so easily appropriated.

Too strong a warning can scarcely be given to Frenchmen who, because they know, as the saying is, their mother tongue, imagine they can teach it, and readily seek and obtain positions in which they at least have a chance of learning English, if they do not teach much French. An intelligent knowledge of English is a *requisite.*

But, on the other hand, the fact that a man is an American gives him absolutely no advantage over the foreigner, so far as handling a class goes, or in the placing himself *en rapport* with the students. These gifts do not pertain to any one nationality, and an American may prove a flat failure as well as a foreigner. The only advantage he has, if it be one, is that he can talk English easily; and when troubled with his acquired French can take refuge in that; but the student suffers more retardation in his progress from good English than from good French, and the foreigner can at least talk that.

In brief, the question of nationality has absolutely no business in this matter; personal fitness alone should be the test.

The business of the teacher is strictly that of helper, especially in the beginnings of the study. He can only make plain, but that he must do, whatever presents any difficulty; he can only intelligently discuss whatever points present themselves to his mind or that of the pupils; he can only show how best to attack and solve a particular problem, indicate why certain turns, certain forms, are used in preference to others; he must remove from the minds of the students that very absurd but deep-rooted belief that every foreign language should in all respects conform to the structure of English, and that where

differences occur, as occur of course they must, there is something radically wrong about that foreign language. Whatever is essentially different between the two must be dwelt upon and made absolutely clear. In a word, the teacher must strive from the outset to make the learners understand the genius of the language, and induce them, by every means in his power, to become as familiar as may be with it. This method, if conscientiously, carefully, and diligently pursued, will, in every case, result not only in a rapidity of progress fairly astonishing to adherents of the older methods, but in a much more intimate acquaintance with, and a greater grasp of, the forms peculiar to French than is possible in any other way. This grammatical teaching must be done, as has been observed, not only by intelligent explanation, — repeated as often as is necessary, and that will always be oftener than most teachers think it necessary, — but by careful reading and writing of exercises by the pupils. There is nothing which so firmly impresses a point on the mind as a written exercise upon it, and nothing which will enable the pupil to make satisfactory progress more than attention on the part of the teacher to the correctness of that written work. This, no doubt, involves on his part an amount of labor which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, will be considered useless drudgery; but it is not: it is a necessary part of the business, which must be done as faithfully as another. It is not showy. it is not interesting perhaps; but it is of the utmost importance that the student should not be permitted to carry away uncorrected work, if by any means within the power of the teacher that work can be made perfect. Besides. every instructor of experience will agree that the mistakes of the students are the helps of the teacher.

A man most thoroughly at home in two or more languages, and such men are by no means rare, may not always recognize at the first glance the peculiar difficulties which a learner has to contend with; what to him is exceedingly simple and plain, may be, and very likely is, exceedingly obscure and difficult to

another; and it is only by constant study of the errors committed by students that the teacher can perfect himself in the work he has undertaken. If, therefore, he avoids the study of those mistakes, whether made in recitation or in written exercises, he voluntarily casts away a most important means of promoting his own success.

### PRONUNCIATION.

Reading must, or should, be taken up almost at the beginning, and here, of course, a very grave difficulty presents itself, that of pronunciation. Most grammars and Methods prepared for use in American or British colleges and schools contain a prefatory chapter purporting to give, approximately at all events, the pronunciation of French sounds. No doubt a demand has arisen for some such help to those who are unable to obtain the pronunciation from some one well qualified, but a moment's reflection will show the hopelessness of attempting to learn or teach pronunciation by such means. If all persons were equally trained to speak their own language, English, for instance, correctly and properly, and if, in addition, they all possessed the power of distinguishing differences of sound, which are as marked to the trained ear as difference of notes in music; and if, further, combinations of English letters could always be relied on to give exactly the same sound, then pronunciation could be taught by such means; or if Bell's "Visible Speech" were universally employed in all schools and colleges as an available and additional aid to the teaching of languages, it would be easy to print directions which, carefully followed, would enable the student to pronounce French correctly; but facts are all the other way. Of the thousands of students who annually begin the study of a foreign language, a very large proportion pronounce their mother tongue in a most peculiar manner. The ear has to be trained, and the learner has to be rid of another idea commonly implanted in his brain, — that because a language is foreign it must be, necessarily, intricate

in its pronunciation. Practically, unless the vocal organs or the "ear" of an individual are defective, there should be no difficulty in any one pronouncing correctly any ordinary modern language, leaving out of the question that characteristic tone which we call the accent, and which betrays so quickly the mother-tongue of the speaker.

Pronunciation, therefore, must be taught at present orally, if it is to approximate to the correct sound; and it is well worth while spending some little time on this point, in order to encourage the learner to make use of sounds with which he is somewhat unfamiliar, and to break down that wide-spread objection to hearing one's self make mistakes. Still, for those who merely desire a reading knowledge, as well as for those who wish to speak the language, there is no necessity for dwelling at too great length at the outset upon the obtaining of a correct pronunciation; that is only a matter of time: it is little by little that the new sounds will be acquired and pronounced fluently. Much reading aloud is desirable, but still more desirable is a great deal of reading, of that reading which will furnish the student with a varied and useful vocabulary, and make him acquainted with turns of expression, with forms of phrase, with syntactical constructions, and idiomatic combinations. Reading not carried on in microscopic fashion by carefully turning up every word in the dictionary, but based upon the fact that there are many words identical, or nearly so, in form and meaning in both languages, thanks to that long intercourse between England and France which brought about, in the language of the former country, the use of many French words, or of words derived from the Latin through the French.

### SIGHT-READING. — COMPOSITION.

Sight-reading, in short, is what must be aimed at quite early. Even if the instructor has to explain many a locution and many a word, he must first and foremost interest his students;

he must create in them a desire to know more; and for that purpose he must not keep them dwelling upon any one point so long that their attention lags through fatigue. There exist in French works enough of the character particularly suited to this plan of study, works which can be put into the hands of young people with the utmost safety, and which they will enjoy, because to the interest of the story itself is added the charm of that artistic style for which French writers are noted above all others, and which makes itself felt even by those who cannot fully appreciate the beauties of the work they are studying.

This is no mere hypothesis, no mere theory, but the result of experience. Students do begin the study of French without knowing a word of the language, without having the faintest notion of its genius or construction, who, in the brief space of four months, are able to translate at sight a piece of ordinary French; are able to follow intelligently the reading, by an instructor, of a French book which they have not previously opened; and who, before their first year of study has elapsed, can of themselves enjoy the perusal of many charming stories which, under the old plan of carefully digging out and polishing every word, with the assistance of that frequently misleading authority, the dictionary, would have remained closed to them for many years; would, indeed, have never been sought by them, because long before they could have acquired any facility in reading, they would have been disgusted and driven from the study by the numerous obstacles and difficulties that presented themselves. Let it be remembered, also, that with the acquisition of a vocabulary of French words, with the familiarity thus gained with French idioms and constructions, comes naturally the power of constructing in good French what one has to say. The translation of English into French, or French composition as it is usually called, should also be carried on on similar principles, though here, of course, the effort required will be a harder one, and

the progress cannot be expected to be quite as rapid ; for there is great difficulty in persuading students to abandon the use of those forms to which they are wedded from childhood for those which are new to them, and the vigor and force of which they neither grasp nor appreciate readily. But after a time it will be found, if the system of carefully explaining on every occasion the essential differences between the two languages is followed, that it is possible to do in French composition what has been done already in French reading; namely, to take an English work and translate it at sight into good French. Such a result should be attained with college students of ordinary intelligence, willing to give up a sufficient amount of time to the preparation of their work, in the course of a couple of years. By this time their reading of French books should have made them familiar with a large number of the simpler works of good authors, and they should be prepared to enter upon the study of the literature as a literature with just as much interest as they would take in the literature of their own language; feeling themselves capable of understanding intelligently a lecture delivered in French, or of following readily the reading of a play, an oration, or a discourse, and of perceiving the beauties which the classic age of French literature, the philosophical period of the eighteenth century, and the splendid cycle of the nineteenth, present.

### GROUNDWORK.

*Qui trop embrasse, mal étreint.* If a student is to learn French, let not the whole grammar, accidence, and syntax, all the idioms of the language, all the difficulties of pronunciation be poured into him at once. The fault of many grammars, methods, introductions, and teachers, is a desire to be erudite and to show how much the author or instructor knows. There are even some of the latter who would feel unhappy if they were inhibited from exhibiting their scholarship.

Enough is enough, and too much should never be expected

or asked of a pupil, young or old. If in the course of two years in a preparatory school, or of one year in college (students more mature and capable of being driven harder), a solid groundwork has been laid, success has been attained. The knowledge of broad outlines, the main points of the grammatical structure of the language, a moderate but well-acquired vocabulary, the power to understand easy spoken French, the ability to compose in simplest French, these are the points to be sought after, the ends to be attained. In succeeding years it is easy to build up on such a foundation; to add, progressively, needed details; to fill in the outline, and to make the pupil *know* French, that is, *use* it easily.

It is desirable to avoid excess of detail at first, and yet it is this excess of detail that is most noticeable in text-books. It is of very little practical importance to place before the beginner all the varieties of use of the preposition *de*, for instance; or all the exceptions to the general rule for the formation of the plural of substantives; or long lists of adjectives, the feminine of which is irregular; or, finally, pages of verbs, most of which he will not come across more than once or twice, if at all, during his first year or two of study. It simply bothers and torments a student to have a number of forms and rules set before him which he can neither understand, digest, nor remember. Elementary work should be elementary; free from all trace of erudition; free from all that is not absolutely necessary.

To illustrate: A beginner in French is in the same condition as a stranger dropped by train or steamer in one of our large cities. He starts out from his hotel for a walk, goes through a number of streets, notices only a few, a very few, of the principal buildings and monuments, and usually cannot quite tell how he got from one point to another. The second day he marks some points near his hotel, gets a better idea of the lay of the city; in the course of a week he knows the main thoroughfares, and probably does not board too often the

wrong street-car. But if he becomes a resident, it takes him still a good deal of time before he is quite familiar with the highways and byways of the place, before he learns the short cuts, and gets to know the best stores. He acquires his knowledge progressively, and would be very much amused were he furnished with a map and directory, and told to get up all the streets and most of the addresses before venturing out; or even were he told it was necessary for him to know the names of all the residents in the street he inhabits.

Few rules, therefore, should be given a learner at the outset. Text-books crammed full of information are favored by insufficiently prepared or indifferent and lazy teachers. They rely on the book; they cram the book down the pupil's throat; they close his mouth with it when he asks a question — the book is everything. Well, that is quite wrong! No book can teach like a living man or woman; no printed page can explain as pleasantly and interestingly as a well-posted, earnest teacher. The book is dead matter — the living being is preferable when living beings are to be instructed. The teacher himself must be the text-book; he, not the printed pages, must be the spring of knowledge for the students. Text-books are very useful, very necessary, but not indispensable for beginners. A good teacher with a small class could wholly dispense with a printed grammar or method, and give all the instruction, rules and exercises to boot, himself. A text-book is an aid, and a secondary one, and should, therefore, never usurp the first place.

Even with few rules, the simple, needed ones, much repetition must be resorted to. It cannot be helped; it is not exhilarating to the teacher, but it is indispensable for the pupil. And when the teacher feels the least inclination to impatience, because a rule, a remark already many times repeated, has been apparently forgotten, just let him remember, or, if he cannot remember, let him be absolutely sure that he, when learning, forgot just as readily the very same things, and

many more perhaps. Then quietly, pleasantly, gladly, give the needed information.

It takes no more time to repeat information than to get mad because it has been forgotten. And it is pleasanter all round.

Teachers — and men in general — are apt not to observe themselves closely enough, and, therefore, to ascribe stupidity, carelessness, laziness, to pupils when they themselves are really in fault. There are, of course, and always will be, stupid, careless, and lazy boys and girls, young men and maidens, men and women; but the proportion of these is by no means so large as some instructors would maintain. What is apparently stupidity in many a pupil, is, in reality, lack of clearness in the teaching. If difficulties are not clearly and intelligently explained, the student cannot master them, and the fault is not his at all. This is very much more frequently the case than many imagine. The writer has seen a great deal of teaching, not of French only, and has been amazed at the numerous imperfections of teachers visited upon the heads of pupils. Carelessness in pupils often arises from carelessness in the teacher; and laziness visible in a class may be traced not too seldom to the fountain-head.

A teacher of French must not spare himself. It is not easy for an American or an Englishman to learn a foreign language. All the help that can be given should be given. It is a mistake to suppose that by refusing the help asked for the student is compelled to do better work. He does not do better; he does worse. The sole purpose of a teacher's existence in that blessed state is to *help*. Assistance properly and promptly given, explanations cheerfully vouchsafed and gladly repeated over and over and over again, will bring on pupils much faster and much more surely than a policy of "find out for yourself — explained it before — so simple any fool would know it."

Again, in all elementary work, which involves a serious

amount of drudgery on the part of the pupil, — no matter how much aided by his instructor, — it is of prime importance to keep up the interest. A class must be always wide awake. If the teacher is sleepy, the pupils will snore; if he is bright and alive, the pupils will be the same. The teacher makes the class what it is. He has no one to blame but himself if it turns out poor with the average material furnished him. He must work, if the students are to work; and he must work harder than they, whether they know it or not. He must lead; always stimulate, encourage. And he must take great care to avoid monotony — it is fatal to success. No one exercise should last too long. Students will do a great deal of work if it is skilfully varied for them. They may not understand this; it is not necessary they should: but the teacher must understand and practise it.

The teacher may tire himself; if he is good he will: he must avoid tiring his pupils. He is not a preacher who has the right to be dull and wearisome; he is an instructor whose first business is to keep his pupils constantly awake, constantly interested, constantly learning and progressing.

Therefore he will vary the study; some grammar, not over much at a time; some written exercises, as a basis for future composition; some reading and translation; much speaking of French; plenty of explanations.

### SIGHT-READING.

Sight-reading may be begun the first week.

Because sight-reading is not only very interesting to students, who derive from it a real sense of progress, but because there is a French element in English; and words alike or nearly alike in both languages are sufficiently numerous to make a short exercise in sight-reading possible and profitable. Needless to say that in the course of the first few lessons in sight-reading, frequent translation of words and phrases even will be required; but very soon the necessity for this will diminish,

and before many weeks are over the class will be able to follow the reading without much translation.

In sight-reading the object is at once to give a vocabulary to students, and to enable them to read French without necessarily translating it into English. They are to be told expressly that they are not expected to understand every word, but to grasp the sense of the passage being read. This is doing in French what nearly everybody does in English. Very few persons, probably, if the test were applied, could give the exact meaning of every English word they read; one need only glance at much of the writing published nowadays to be sure of that point, and also that writers themselves do not always understand the meaning of the words they use.

Sight-reading is a sure means of interesting students. Instead of wearying them by the dry and repellent old-time method of painfully digging out the meaning of each separate word in ten lines of Fénelon's "Télémaque" or Voltaire's "Charles XII.," it enables them to read, understand, and enjoy complete books. First year students in Harvard, for instance, read through Halévy's "L'Abbé Constantin," Erckmann-Châtrian's "Madame Thérèse," Labiche's "La Poudre aux Yeux" and "Le Voyage de M. Perrichon," George Sand's "La Mare au Diable," besides Mérimée's "L' Enlèvement de la Redoute," and extracts from Souvestre and other writers. In short, students being interested willingly do an amount of work which, under the old method, could never have been got out of them.

Translation goes hand in hand with sight-reading, but it must be translation, not transliteration. The plan of giving the exact dictionary meaning of each successive word is barbarous and productive of all manner of evil results. What a student must be taught to do is to avoid literal translation, and to give instead an equivalent in good English of the French original. A single example will suffice to illustrate the difference; and be it noted that the literal translation is

by no means exaggerated; it is just the kind of thing that teachers have heard over and over again: —

"Non, voyez-vous, Monsieur l'Abbé, vous avez tort de prendre les choses au tragique. . . . Tenez, regardez ma petite jument, comme elle trotte! comme elle lève les pattes! Vous ne la connaissiez pas. Savez-vous ce que je l'ai payée? Quatre cents francs. Je l'ai dénichée, il y a quinze jours, dans les brancards d'une charette de maraîcher. Une fois que c'est bien dans son train, ça vous fait quatre lieues à l'heure, et on en a plein les mains, tout le temps."

Here is the literal translation, such as the student is likely to give it with the help of the dictionary: —

"No, see you, Mr. Abbé, you are wrong to take things tragically. Hold, look at my little mare, how she trots! how she raises the paws, hoofs! You did not know it. Do you know that which I have paid? Four hundred francs! I found it out, there are fifteen days, in the shafts of a cart of a market-gardener. One time that it is well in its train it makes you four leagues to the hour, and one has the hands full of it, all the time."

Now, the student who is trained to sight-reading and to translate the *sense* of the passage and not the mere words, irrespective of their idiomatic meaning, will more nearly approximate this: —

"Now, look here, sir; you should not look at the dark side of things. . . . Why, look at that little mare of mine, how she steps out! Didn't know I had her, did you? Guess what I paid for her? Four hundred francs. Picked her up a fortnight ago from a market-gardener. Once she gets into her gait she does her twelve miles an hour, and it is all you can do to hold her too."

All allusions met with in the course of the reading should be explained, whether they refer to customs, manners, books, men, or history — and they should be explained slowly in French, repeating words or sentences if necessary; using simple language; speaking distinctly, and pitching the voice so that it will reach every part of the room. It may be advisable occasionally, but only occasionally, to briefly recapitulate in English what has been said in French; but this should

not often be done; much better stimulate the curiosity of the students. If they have not understood once, they will be anxious to understand the next time.

The test of sight-reading and good translation is not examination on a book already read in class, but on passages wholly new to the pupils. That test should be applied pretty frequently. It is a mistake to take it for granted that the students are progressing because they appear to work hard and the system employed by the instructor is good. The instructor must *know* that progress is being made; he must, therefore, use frequent tests to ascertain the exact standing of each pupil.

### COMPOSITION.

The term "French composition" is often misunderstood in practice to mean transliteration from English into French. It is scarcely possible to commit a worse error, or one fraught with more disastrous consequences to students.

To turn a passage in English into French words is neither translation nor composition. It may approach the former; it is wide of the latter.

Composition means writing good French, and in the French way, with the French stamp.

This is not what is usually done. Instead, the dictionary is called upon, and about the first word found is accepted as sufficient and put down. The work thus done is invariably bad — no exception whatever obtains to this rule.

The first thing to be done when a passage in English is set for transposition into French, is to make sure that the pupils understand the meaning of the English. It is presumed the teacher does; it is certain that ninety-eight per cent of the pupils seldom or never take the trouble to assure themselves that they thoroughly grasp the sense of the passage.

This is the main obstacle to good work.

It must be impressed upon teachers and pupils alike that the

object to be attained is the reproduction, in another language, of the *sense* of the passage, of the ideas contained in it, as clearly, as plainly as possible.

That is the first and most important point.

The next, which is secondary, is to follow, as closely as the first point will permit, the form and style of the original.

Literal translation must be condemned. It is destructive of all truth and fidelity. It proceeds on the principle that the same words arranged in the same order give the same meaning in both languages. This is so utterly false that one cannot help wondering that any teacher should tolerate literal translation for a moment.

Generally speaking the use of elision is more frequent in English than in French. The tendency of the pupil is, naturally, to follow the English fashion. The teacher must not be surprised if it takes a long time to eradicate that habit — it has grown up with the student; it is part and parcel of his mode of thought.

French is richer in forms than English. That point has already been referred to with regard to the noun, article, and adjective. It is true, likewise, of the pronoun and the verb. Compare, for instance: —

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Masc. sing. | mine | le mien |
| Fem. " | mine | la mienne |
| Masc. plur. | ours | le nôtre, les nôtres |
| Fem. " | ours | la nôtre, les nôtres |

And in the verb: —

| | |
|---|---|
| I had | j'avais |
| Thou hadst | tu avais |
| He had | il avait |
| We had | nous avions |
| You had | vous aviez |
| They had | ils avaient |

The tendency of the pupil is to use one form only, or two or three at most, as in English. This also must be checked; and

while the training will begin during the year of elementary work, it will be found that it takes time to accustom the pupil to the difference between the two tongues.

The varied meanings of an English word are another source of trouble, complicated by unintelligent use of the dictionary. Here is one instance out of very many: "A stout German who leans on the railing," was actually translated: "*Un gros Allemand qui s'appuie sur la médisance.*"

The words *may* and *might* and *could* are constantly misapprehended and no distinction recognized in their use as independent or auxiliary verbs.

Idioms are troublesome, but mainly because teachers are apt to yield to the silly request to know "what it means *literally.*" An idiom never has any literal meaning, and the attempt to reproduce it literally is an exercise only fit for idiots. What possible good is done by translating literally — *Qu'est-ce que c'est que cela?* when *What is that?* is the real meaning of the longer phrase. Or, *Il se tordait les côtes de rire — He twisted his ribs with laughing,* which does not convey at all exactly the sense of the original, while, *He split his sides laughing,* does.

One can only give equivalents of idioms, and for this purpose, among others, it is requisite that the teacher should have a thorough knowledge of both tongues.

In composition, as in every other part of the work, explanation should be given freely and fully, all questions answered, all doubts cleared up. It is an applied, a practical way of teaching grammar, and can be made very useful if the teacher does not spare himself. Repetition will be needed, and a good deal of it; but it is fruitful in good results, and, besides, an instructor must never weary of restating a rule.

It is very important that the transcribed exercises should be read over by the instructor himself, even if he does not actually correct them, so that he may see exactly the nature and number of mistakes made. This will enable him to ex-

plain corrections in future lessons and to lay stress upon the particular points in which he finds the average of his pupils weak.

Particularly weak pupils should be taken in hand separately and shown exactly what their mistakes are, how to correct and, above all, how to avoid them. Many pupils fail from not knowing how to set about their work; they start wrong, and all the explanations given in class are Greek to them because they cannot see the object of them. A very little private work with such students is certain to bring them up to the level of their class and to transform them from apparently dull into intelligently receptive individuals.

It will generally be found that they do not understand the use of the dictionary; that they are not well grounded in the elements of grammar, or that, being fairly well grounded, they do not know how to apply what they have learned; and, finally, that they are totally ignorant of construction, a serious drawback in the study of a language in which clearness of expression is the prime requisite.

Few persons, among those whose mother-tongue is English, have any idea of how very loose and inaccurate is much of the so-called good English met with in books. The great freedom which the vigor and richness of the language allow of in its use, the frequency of ellipsis, the boldness of inversion, the large employment of figures and similes, are very apt to induce considerable carelessness in the expression of the meaning sought to be conveyed, resulting frequently in sheer obscurity. Now, this is utterly foreign to the spirit of the French language. A French writer knows and feels that he must be clear, and no piece of prose or verse which lacks this quality has any chance of being rated good.

Hence the instructor must take special pains to make certain that his students understand the meaning of the passage they are called upon to reproduce in French, and this is little attended to as a rule. There is apt to be a blind belief that

because an extract is taken from the works of a celebrated writer, the English is all right. It ought to be; it generally is, but not always; and even if it is, it by no means follows that the student understands it. Ignorance is very willing to let things go, and if a pupil does not care to take the trouble to grasp the sense of the extract, he simply makes a transliteration of it — a hideous abomination.

Here, by way of illustration, is an extract from "Pictures of Places," by Henry James, Jr. It reads very well at the first glance, but on examination, for the purpose of reproduction in French, the involved nature of some of the sentences and the very curious figures used become strikingly apparent: —

"The standpoint you are likely to choose first is that on the Canada Cliff, a little way above the suspension bridge. The great fall faces you, enshrined in its own surging incense. Already you see the world-famous green, baffling painters, baffling poets, shining on the lip of the precipice; the more so, of course, for the clouds of silver and snow into which it speedily resolves itself. The whole picture before you is admirably simple. The Horseshoe glares and boils and smokes from the centre to the right, drumming itself into powder and thunder; in the centre the dark pedestal of Goat Island divides the double flood; to the left booms in vaporous dimness the minor battery of the American Fall; while on a level with the eye, above the still crest of either cataract, appear the white faces of the hithermost rapids. The circle of weltering froth at the base of the Horseshoe, emerging from the dead-white vapors — absolutely white, as moonless midnight is absolutely black — which muffle impenetrably the crash of the river upon the lower bed, melts slowly into the darker shades of green."

Two very brief extracts from James Russell Lowell's "Essays" will make quite clear the necessity of understanding the author's meaning before attempting to reproduce it: —

"His 'French Revolution' is a series of lurid pictures, unmatched for vehement power, in which the figures of such sons of earth as Mirabeau and Danton loom gigantic and terrible, as in the glare of an eruption, their shadows swaying far and wide grotesquely awful. But all is painted by eruption-flashes in violent light and shade. There are no half-tints, no gradations, and one finds it impossible to account for the continuance

in power of less Titanic actors in the tragedy, like Robespierre, on any theory whether of human nature or of individual character supplied by Mr. Carlyle. Of his success, however, in accomplishing what he aimed at, which was to haunt the mind with memories of a horrible political nightmare, there can be no doubt."

Translate any part of this literally, and the result is incomprehensible nonsense. "Eruption-flashes," for instance.

Or this, which, at first sight, appears quite easy: —

Burke and Johnson were both of them sincere men, both of them men of character as well as of intellectual force; and I cite their opinions of Rousseau with the respect due to an honest conviction which has apparent grounds for its adoption, whether we agree with it or no.

Burke et Johnson étaient tous les deux hommes sincères, tous les deux hommes de caractère aussi bien que de force intellectuelle; et je cite leurs opinions de Rousseau avec le respect dû à une honnête conviction qui a des raisons apparentes pour son adoption, soit que nous nous accordions avec ou non —

which is very easy to do indeed, but is no more French than it is Chinese.

From the very outset pupils must be taught to use the simplest construction possible; to avoid lengthy sentences, abrupt inversions, obscure figures or similes. The art of composing in any language is not easily acquired, and to attempt to rival masters of language and style in the earlier stages of study is a piece of folly. These masters will furnish useful models, gradually improving the taste; but the main object of the teacher must be to enable his students to express themselves clearly and readily. For it must not be forgotten that translation of extracts is not the ultimate end to be attained. It is only a means to it, the end itself being the power, on the part of the student, to express himself at once in written French without first putting down his thoughts in English. Then, and then only, does he compose; but if he is constantly kept to English models, he will always want English to lean on — in other words, he will never *master* French.

Therefore students — and this applies to pupils in secondary

schools equally as much as to students in colleges — must be early set simple exercises in original composition. These may be a few lines only in length; consist of detached sentences even, but they must be written without the interposition of English. With the gradual progress made, the exercises increase in length and difficulty. The class hears read a short story, and writes a summary of it. Later still, a book having been finished,— say "La Mare au Diable"—the pupils are asked to write down either a scene from it, or a description of one of the characters, or a sketch of the plot. Again, after a vacation, they can be called upon for a short letter, telling how they spent their time. The results will often be crude, so crude, perhaps, as to discourage the teacher. He *must not be discouraged.* That anything has been produced is of itself a satisfactory result, and a guaranty that the students are capable, with careful instruction and inexhaustible patience, of doing better work.

By way of illustrating what is actually obtained from students, here are a couple of notes written, the one on December 20, the other on December 23, by two students who entered the elementary class in French at the beginning of October, neither of them having ever learned a word of the language at that time: —

I. "Avec cette même malle, je vous envoie cinq livres bleus des exercises français. Fidèlement, mon cœur est plus léger depuis ils sont partis. J'éspere que vous chercherez en vain des erreurs, mais j'ai pressentment de mal."

II. "J'ai reçu votre lettre ce matin, et je serai très heureux accepter votre invitation obligeante, sur le soir de Noël, le 25 Decembre, quoique je suis chagrin que mes aims Japons sont occupés ce soir là."

The first of these was written by an American, the second by a Japanese.

The more pains an instructor takes, the better the results will be; consequently, as pupils advance in composition work,

it is advisable to adopt something like the seminar plan. The asking of questions must be encouraged to the utmost, for even the cleverest and most experienced teacher can never remember *all* the difficulties.

When the work thus corrected *viva voce* in class has been transcribed, the instructor should, before proceeding to a new piece of work, re-read the correct form and again give explanations, if called upon — which he will be if the class is good. The *reason* of changes should always be explained; a pupil should know why a certain expression or term is right and another wrong.

In more advanced work where themes or summaries are written by the students, the corrections will be made out of class, as it would manifestly be impossible to correct each theme with the whole class and retain their attention; but arrangements should be made to meet a certain small, very small, number of the students separately at another hour, and there and then explain carefully the why and wherefore of each correction or substitution. Merely to correct in red ink is to assume a knowledge of grammar and style on the part of the student which he evidently does not possess, or he would not have needed corrections on his work.

Composition thus taught, in conjunction with much reading of French texts and with constant hearing of spoken French, will result in such marked progress that the student will gladly do any amount of work, do it well, and become really proficient in French.

### MEMORIZING.

Memorizing passages of verse or prose is an exercise little relished, usually, by students, but it is a very useful one in three respects.

First, it increases the vocabulary of the pupil, and this is of great importance. All words are not retained, of course, but

those recurring frequently are well fixed in the memory, and it is these very words which are most needed by the learner.

Secondly, forms and locutions are acquired with comparative facility, and the more they are unlike those of the pupil's mother tongue, the more readily will they strike him and stimulate the desire to learn their exact force.

Thirdly, if the passages are recited aloud to an instructor, an excellent opportunity is afforded to correct and improve the pronunciation, always a difficult task, and one which must be constantly attended to.

The passages may usually be left to the choice of pupils themselves, controlled by the teacher's advice that such extracts should be preferred as are from good writers and usually referred to in books or conversation.

To make memorizing compulsory is probably unwise. Some people lack the peculiar power of memory which enables one to learn extracts by heart; it is wasting time and trouble to compel such individuals to memorize even a short fable of La Fontainé. They will stumble over the lines, mispronounce the words, lose the connection, make a mess of the sense, and irritate the instructor possibly, themselves certainly. In this, as in all other methods employed, due attention must be paid to the individual peculiarities of the pupil. Machine work, routine system, are quite inadmissible if success is to be obtained.

### DICTATION.

This exercise is not open to the reservation made in the case of memorizing. It is good for all classes of pupils, and may profitably be employed even in the most advanced classes. Its primary use lies in accustoming beginners to recognize sounds and translate them into orthography. Beginners always mispronounce French when called upon to read aloud; they mispronounce it infinitely more when reading to themselves: what they go by is the *look* of the printed or written

word; what they recognize is the combination of characters, a familiar termination: they do not readily or correctly apprehend the words when spoken. Reading aloud by the instructor is an excellent means of helping pupils to connect the written or printed word with the sound of it when spoken; but it has one drawback in this respect: the student seeks to gather and follow the sense of the passage rather than to catch the sound of the words. Particularly is this the case when the class has the text to look at; then there is very little real work done in the way of connecting sound and print.

In dictation, on the other hand, the main object, at first, is to accustom the pupil to note carefully the sound of the spoken words and to write these sounds correctly. The sense of the passage is relatively unimportant in earlier exercises of this nature; it has to be taken into consideration, that goes without saying, but if it is not grasped no harm is done. All dictations in the early part of a course in French should be directed to one end, — recognizing printed or written words by the sounds. It is the training of the ear, not of the eye.

This training is a necessary adjunct to the teaching of pronunciation. The pupil cannot imitate what he does not hear; therefore he must be taught to hear, to distinguish one sound from the other, so that he may reproduce it correctly. A large amount of patience is needed here by both instructor and learner. The latter must apply himself attentively to catch the sounds actually emitted by the instructor, and he must beware of anticipating the sound; that is, taking it for granted that a particular combination of letters is pronounced in the way he has adopted for himself. As long as he does that he is sure to err; he will hear, not the pronunciation given by the instructor, but the pronunciation he has fixed upon in his own mind. It is like the jangling of bells — they ring whatever refrain happens to be trotting in one's head.

The instructor must be patient, particularly in repeating as frequently as necessary the words dictated, and in pronoun-

cing them distinctly. And here he must not forget that there are two ways of uttering words, and that he must use both if the pupil is to be properly helped along. There is the ordinary utterance, that used in conversation, in reading, where many syllables are slurred; and there is the syllabic, in which each member of the word is pronounced separately. *C'est un enfant extravagant* pronounced in both fashions will illustrate the point. Pronounced currently, the pupil will hear the phrase as in conversation; pronounced in syllables, he will have a better idea of the component members of each word, — *but* the instructor must always end by pronouncing the words conversationally, since that is the way in which they will usually be heard by the student.

Elementary dictations should bear upon those sounds which are *alike* in French and in English; there are, strictly speaking, no sounds exactly alike, but in practice many sufficiently resemble each other. Next, words in which similar or nearly similar combinations of letters occur in both languages should be practised on, *e. g.: nation,* nation; *historien,* historian; *canal,* canal; *science,* science; etc. Then sounds wholly French, comprising the whole range of nasals, the liquid *l*, the *y* in the middle of a word, and so on. After this, distinction between similar terminations in French, *bon, vont, aiment, souvent.*

With the progress of the pupil the dictations must assume a different character; rapidity of enunciation must be gradually introduced and the understanding of the sense of the passage insisted upon. Here, too, help must be given. When entering upon this part of the work the substance of the passage to be dictated may be explained briefly in English; the subject indicated at least. Then the whole passage should be read slowly and distinctly in French, to give the class an opportunity of understanding it, as far as possible; next the dictation proper, not many words at once; these repeated three or four times over, and the punctuation indicated, care having

been taken to inscribe on the blackboard the signs of punctuation, with their names in French. Finally, the passage should be re-read throughout. All this means trouble, but without trouble and painstaking no teacher can succeed. He needs to take both, and *intelligently.*

Correction of the dictation may be done in many ways. A very bad way, preferred by lazy instructors, is to have the work passed on to the next pupil, a general interchange thus taking place, and the pupils themselves being told to correct from the text if they have it. This plan invariably results in numerous mistakes being left uncorrected and in many miscorrections. The proper corrector is the instructor. He should make a point of looking at every separate exercise, so as to see for himself not merely the number, but, what is infinitely more important, the *nature* of the mistakes. It is an excellent lesson for him; a mode of obtaining very valuable information.

Once he has ascertained in this way what are the individual faults, which are the sounds most generally misapprehended, he can proceed to correct *in class,* using the blackboard largely to supplement his *viva voce* spelling. In thus correcting — it is understood that each pupil has had his exercise returned to him — the instructor must lay stress upon the more common mistakes he has noticed and illustrate by pronunciation and writing the difference between the right and the wrong way.

Dictations should never be very long; if they are they become tiresome to the pupil and do harm instead of good. Teachers who give long dictations do not correct them.

### SPEAKING FRENCH.

There are many teachers, and very good ones among them too, who believe that in teaching a foreign language English should be used for all explanations.

The writer believes that on the very first day a beginner should hear the sound of the language he desires to learn, and that he should be taught in that language as far as possible.

Not that English need be proscribed; it cannot be in large classes if progress is to be made, but it should be entirely secondary; used as little as possible, and only when repeated attempts to make intelligible an explanation in French have failed.

Pupils will quickly pick up the ordinary phrases used in the work of the class-room; more difficult expressions, longer explanations, they will understand pretty readily if the blackboard is used as it should be, and especially if the teacher is patient and has sense enough to remember that Rome was not built in a day.

Reading at sight will greatly aid students in understanding spoken French, but the best means of making them do so is, after all, to speak it. If the teacher takes pains to speak slowly and distinctly at first, choosing easy words, using simple expressions and the simplest possible constructions, it is quite astonishing how rapidly a large class will learn to understand him.

Students should be encouraged to ask their questions in French; they will bungle very often, and some strange sounds will be heard, impossible, perhaps, to understand. In that case, let the teacher ask that the question be put in English, and then repeat it himself in French, drawing attention to the words used and to their pronunciation. The next time the student speaks, an improvement will be noticed.

If teachers only knew it — those who do not believe in speaking French — they could interest their class very greatly by talking about a point of grammar in French, or explaining an allusion, a word even. One of the pleasantest sights is to see some hundred and odd students listening "with all their ears" to a ten or twelve minutes' talk in French; students who, three or four months before, had never heard a word of the language.

But it may be objected that the understanding is only apparent, and that in reality the pupils thus addressed have not a ghost of an idea of what is being said. Very good; only when pupils do not understand, they do one of two things, sometimes both; they cease to listen, or they speak right out in meeting, and say they do not comprehend. The American student is not bashful, as a rule.

But foolish indeed is the teacher who neglects to *test* his pupils. The exercise of speaking to the class can be easily proved useful; in this way: talk for five, ten, fifteen minutes in French; then straightway make every pupil write down in English the substance of what has been said. This test has been applied over and over again with invariably good results, the percentage of failures being rarely more than two or three per cent. The summaries are of course collected at once.

A class so taught will prefer to be talked to in French, and every member of it feels that he has made distinct progress. He becomes more and more interested, and the teacher can be sure that all the work he wants done will be done.

Further, pupils thus prepared in their first year will be capable of acquiring a speaking knowledge of French much more quickly, and they will soon learn to follow and understand not only readings, but lectures in French. The language is then a living one to them. It *is* a language, a tool, a help in reality.

### CONVERSATION.

A college student who learns Latin or Greek may be satisfied to read and write it with facility; but if he studies a modern language he ought also to be able to speak it. No training in modern languages is complete which does not include these three points, — facility in reading, writing, speaking.

Unfortunately, speaking cannot be taught in classes as

numerous as are those in most colleges, and especially in some of the larger institutions. Hence the failure of these institutions to turn out as many completely fitted men as they should.

The success of the language schools, so-called, arises from the classes being restricted in numbers. The idea is not original with them, but they have had the sense to apply it; and they deserve, consequently, all the patronage they get, even if they do not always succeed in carrying pupils very far.

When it comes to trying to teach more than a dozen persons at a time to speak in a foreign language, the task is so much beyond the powers of even very good instructors, that they tire themselves out without any corresponding good results.

Students can be taught to speak a foreign language, even if they have not the opportunity of going abroad; but it can only be done by capable instructors handling a restricted number of pupils, and meeting their class frequently during the week.

No class should exceed twelve in number: eight is quite enough; but a smart, competent teacher, with plenty of "snap," capable of making the lesson bright, lively, and interesting, can handle ten or twelve without too much over-expenditure of nervous force.

The first difficulty the teacher has to contend with in pupils is shyness. The sound of his own voice uttering foreign words is usually sufficient to "rattle" the most self-possessed student; and it is very difficult to make learners get over that feeling. It is worse in a large class; it amounts, in practice, to frequent stoppage of effort on the part of pupils. A small class is therefore likely to do better: for one reason, each member of it gets to know the teacher more quickly, therefore better, and is more apt to acquire courage to speak out.

The more tact a teacher has the better in this kind of

work. There must be no laughing *at* the student; on the contrary, a visible and real interest in his progress, and a constant readiness, nay, eagerness, to assist, aid, correct. There is scarcely anything more trying to a student than the attempt to express himself in a foreign language in the presence of others. Even if by a determined effort the feeling of shyness is overcome, there remains the difficulty of finding words to express the thought, of co-ordinating them, when found, in a properly constructed sentence, and of pronouncing the whole sentence in a way to make it partially intelligible. It is very important that the teacher should remember that these difficulties and obstacles present themselves each time that the student endeavors to speak; and he must from this fact learn to be very patient indeed and helpful to the utmost. It is well, also, to explain to the class that these difficulties exist, and must be met and overcome. When students see that their instructor knows thoroughly, and appreciates fully, the troubles they suffer from, they are at once encouraged. Encouragement, assistance, is what the teacher must give.

The instruction in conversation classes is best given in French exclusively. The object must be to counteract the tendency of the pupils to fall back upon English; a tendency so strong that no pains must be spared to check it. This is one of the reasons why conversation classes are so peculiarly exhausting: there is a strain put upon the instructor greater perhaps than in any other part of his work. Another reason is the necessity of bearing in mind the vocabulary already taught the students, so that a regular progression may be maintained and new words introduced just when needed. In this branch of the teaching of French, system is indispensable. It will not do to get up at haphazard conversations on all subjects under the sun. That plan answers very well with advanced classes, the members of which have acquired a sufficient vocabulary, fluency of speech, and, consequently, self-reliance. In the earlier stages of the work the ground must

be carefully prepared, and the pupil brought along from one point to another with the feeling that he is capable of advancing. This necessitates not only system and memory on the part of the teacher, but very frequent repetition at first, until the fundamental groups of words and sentences are thoroughly mastered. Tedious, this, if not varied, but it is for the teacher to be constantly bright, quick, alive; if *he* is, the class will be. If he be dull, the class will go to sleep.

Recourse should not be had to plays and novels. The temptation to the teacher to simply read the scenes or passages which he enjoys is very great, and the exercise is suddenly transformed from one in conversation to one in understanding reading. The better the teacher reads, the more he should avoid doing it. The pupils hear conversation read out; they are not themselves speaking.

Indeed, it cannot be too often impressed upon a teacher that his business in a conversation class, is not to talk himself, but to make the students talk. The former is easy, the latter is difficult; but it is the duty to be performed, and students should complain if the instructor indulges in monologues. It is not often that they will do it openly: they do it privately, among themselves, even when they have, for reasons of personal amusement or laziness, induced the monologue. Make the students talk — that is what the instructor of a conversation class must constantly repeat to himself.

### CLASSIC WRITERS.

La Fontaine, Corneille, Molière, Racine, are read to a small extent in most elementary classes — meaning by elementary, first, second, and third year work in secondary schools, and first and second in colleges. It would be better for the pupils, and certainly for the authors, if neither fables nor plays were included in the curriculum of those years. Seventeenth century French comes under the denomination of modern French, of course, but only by contrast with Old French. A person

who can read nineteenth century French with ease will have little or no trouble in reading the classics of the golden age; but the case is different with those who are practically beginners. They cannot thoroughly appreciate the beauties of these writers because they are having a constant struggle with words whose meaning has changed, with forms and constructions which are obsolete. Their yet shaky knowledge of modern syntax is constantly being troubled by forms which they have been told they must not use, and which, nevertheless, are declared right when employed by masters of literature.

They are apt to be interested in Molière's comedies: "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" and "L'Avare" may always be depended upon to amuse a class, especially if read rapidly enough to enable the pupils to follow the fun: "Le Cid," in a minor degree, will captivate a portion at least; but Corneille's other masterpieces or Racine's superb works are dull and prosy to them. These splendid works of art should not be lowered to the base use of mere reading-exercises, but kept for that time in the study of the language when the pupils having acquired sufficient familiarity with it, no longer stumble along, but read with facility without the necessity for translation. *Then* the great writers may profitably be taken up and genuine enjoyment derived by students and teacher from intelligent study of comedy, tragedy, or fable.

Of the four, La Fontaine is least fitted for elementary work spite of the fact that in France it is a recognized child's book. Nothing can be more dreary for the pupils, more painful for the teacher, than the translating of even the first book of the Fables as usually done. It is a grievous, wicked sacrifice of exquisitely beautiful work, resulting in no good to anybody, and generally inspiring the pupil with as profound a detestation of La Fontaine as was formerly inspired for Fénelon by the misuse of his admirable prose poem. La Fontaine is essentially a writer for appreciative readers; besides which his

frequent use of archaisms and *patois* makes his fables particularly difficult of understanding to beginners.

If, however, La Fontaine, Corneille, Molière, and Racine are to be read, let them be read in such a way as will diminish as much as possible the objections raised above.

To begin with the fabulist. Instead of simply starting on reading and translating "La Cigale et la Fourmi," explaining painfully what *bise* means; that cicalas do not eat worms; that *oût* is spelt *août*, and so on, let the hint given by the poet himself be taken, and the collection of fables be presented to the pupil as *une ample comédie à cent actes divers.*

If the class is sufficiently advanced to understand spoken French, let the teacher, using that tongue, tell his pupils about the France of Louis the Fourteenth, its splendor and misery, its division into provinces almost as much separated the one from the other as if they were foreign countries, its magnificent court of Versailles, its nobility, its clergy, its *bourgeoisie* and its peasantry. Let him picture the times and the men; let him make La Fontaine, the *bonhomme*, live again before the class; show him wandering in woods, and by river and brook, or silent and observant in society, or bright and witty with the friends; and then, taking each fable, make plain each different act, show the alternate farce and drama, comedy and tragedy; the home scenes, the episodes of peasant life, the hits at king and courtier, the portraits of man, the mirror held up to nature. At once the class will brighten, and instead of voting La Fontaine a bore, follow with real interest and ever-renewed pleasure each successive scene. Let not the translation be a desperately dull transliteration, but a vivacious, racy, idiomatic reproduction of the original, retaining as much of the bloom, of the beauty, of the *esprit*, subtle and keen, as may suffer transposition into another tongue.

So with the dramatists. A vivid representation of the times, a clear exposition of the conditions under which they worked, a brief summary of the plot if desired, and a reading

of the text from which monotony is carefully excluded. One can do serious and thorough work without preternatural gravity and excessive boring of pupils. Lighten the tragedy as much as possible — there is not one piece which will not bear this treatment; bring out strongly the fine passages, the striking scenes; summarize the duller and less important; read *well* when reading to the class; possess your soul in patience when the class reads to you. As for the comedy, it will always take care of itself.

# PRACTICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS OF MODERN LANGUAGE STUDY.

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THE student of educational affairs who has devoted any attention to the recent history of modern language study, must have been impressed with its progress and development during the last few decades in all civilized countries. The activity in this field has been such that it may well be compared with the revival of classical study in the sixteenth century; more than one striking parallel might be drawn between that period and the present, and, as is so frequently the case, our less biased view of past conditions might make it easier for us to see things of immediate concern in their true light.

The question what effect such an event is likely to have upon education in general, what relation it bears to the civilization of the age, is one in which all thoughtful people will easily be interested. In the minds of those who take an active part in educational affairs, this question naturally assumes a somewhat more definite and restricted form. We ask: *Why do we teach modern languages?* and it is this question I will endeavor to answer. It seems advisable, however, for the present purpose, to limit the term "modern languages" so as to exclude the vernacular; not, indeed, because the English does not deserve the first and most earnest consideration in any discussion of the subject of living languages, but because, for that very reason, and for others as well, it is more appropriately treated by itself. My remarks will also, for obvious reasons, have reference mainly to French and German only.

The first answer to our question may be given in the words of another : [13] *We teach modern languages, "essentially because they are so supremely useful."* Let no one, not even the votary of the sublimest idealism, for a moment be shocked by this confession ! We say we teach modern languages because they are useful ; who will advocate the teaching of useless things ? We do not say, however, that we teach French and German because they can under all circumstances be put to immediate use in any special industry or trade ; that is impossible, as will appear farther on.

What we do claim is, first, that the modern languages are extremely useful as *a means to literary culture and to a liberal education.* "We believe," Macaulay wrote in 1837, "that the books which have been written in the languages of Western Europe during the last two hundred and fifty years are of greater value than all the books which at the beginning of that period were extant in the world." [1] If this statement might possibly have seemed too strong at the time when made, it certainly cannot be considered so now, with the immense additional literature of the last half century thrown into one scale of the balance. The languages which furnish the key to a large portion of this treasure are indeed useful ; and John Stuart Blackie, late professor of Greek in Edinburgh University, may well say that "the languages which claim most loudly the regard of an English-speaking gentleman of the present day, whether on the east or the west side of the Atlantic, are French and German." Next to the French and German he names the Latin, Greek, and Italian.[2]

The claims of modern literature, with reference to its æsthetic value and moral effect, and as a means of a more general diffusion of correct taste, have been discussed by able writers, who assign to it the first place in the intellectual culture of our time.[6] Lowell has pointed out how much the great English writers are indebted for their *style* to other

[1] Essay on Lord Bacon. [2] N.Y. *Independent*, Nov. 26, 1891.

moderns: "Did not Spenser . . . form himself on French models?" he asks. "Did not Chaucer and Gower, the shapers of our tongue, draw from the same sources? . . . Is not the verse of 'Paradise Lost' moulded on that of the 'Divina Comedia'? Did not Dryden's prose and Pope's verse profit by Parisian example? Nay, in our time is it not whispered that more than one of our masters of style in English, and they, too, among the chief apostles of classic culture, owe more of this mastery to Paris than to Athens and Rome?"[7] And as to ideas, the same great writer exclaims: "And shall we say that the literature of the last three centuries is incompetent to put a healthy strain upon the more strenuous faculties of the mind? That it does not appeal to or satisfy the mind's loftier desires? That Dante, Machiavelli, Montaigne, Bacon, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Pascal, Calderon, Lessing, and he of Weimar, in whom Carlyle and so many others have found their University, — that none of these set our thinking gear in motion to as good purpose as any ancient of them all? Is it less instructive to study the growth of modern ideas than of ancient?"[7] I will dismiss this point with the words of President Cox, of the University of Cincinnati, "I believe that whilst we could not afford to lose the old culture, we cannot afford to neglect the new." ([25] iv., 3.)

It is further claimed that the modern languages are useful, nay, indispensable aids in the pursuit of other branches of knowledge. First of all, I mention the study of *English*. "Disguise it as we may," wrote Professor Hunt of Princeton, ten years ago, "it is not the most consoling reflection of the patriotic Englishman or American, that as yet the ablest researches into our vernacular are the product of Continental, if not of German, scholarship. . . . English grammar, most especially, has been studied in Germany from the scientific standpoint, with constant reference to primitive principles and forms."[1] Not quite ten years later another high author-

[1] *Princeton Review*, 1881, pp. 227, 231.

ity could make the statement that it was no longer necessary for the American student of English to go abroad to be taught the earlier forms of his mother tongue; that Anglo-Saxon and other Teutonic languages were taught in all the centres of learning in this country. And the number of institutions which have in recent years extended their courses in English is indeed very great. On the other hand, a large proportion of the leading works on the English language and literature are still written in foreign languages, and the same is true of articles in periodicals. A glance at recent numbers of *Englische Studien* and *Anglia* shows that all contributions to the latter, and sixteen out of seventeen to the former, are in German. Aside from this use of foreign languages in the pursuit of advanced scholarship in English, the study of foreign languages is itself one of the best means of learning one's own. "We have learned," says one of the greatest American scholars, "that the round-about course, through other tongues, to the comprehension and mastery of our own, is the shortest." [10]

The advanced student of the ancient classics, of philology, and of archæology, can no more pursue his study without French and German, than an ocean steamer can run from New York to San Francisco by the overland route.

In *Mathematics* we have it from good authority that ten valuable works in either French or German are published to one in English, so that it is impossible to make up a good mathematical library of English works alone.

Books in the *Physical* and *Natural Sciences* are perhaps translated more frequently than those in other departments, but here, too, much that is of the highest value to the specialist can be found only in some foreign language. There is a recent statement of Dr. S. Sheldon to the effect that Wiedermann's *Annalen der Physik*, and the *Jahresberichte* of the German Chemical Society, "contain more original matter each month than is published in America during a whole year." [1]

[1] Pedagogical Seminary, III., p. 488.

Until recently the *Science of Education* might almost have been considered a German science. Within the last twenty years, however, the contributions in English, French, and other languages to pedagogical literature have been numerous and important. Still, an examination of the monthly bulletins of publications in this field, or of educational bibliographies, shows a preponderance of German works; and the references in English treatises on the science of education are mostly to German authorities.

In an historical and critical work on *Aryan Philology*, published some twelve years ago by an Italian,[1] about four-fifths of the books cited are German.

In short, to use the words of President Eliot of Harvard, "the philologists, archæologists, metaphysicians, physicians, physicists, naturalists, chemists, economists, engineers, architects, artists, and musicians all agree that a knowledge of these languages is indispensable to the intelligent pursuit of any one of their respective subjects beyond its elements." [15] Or, to quote the president of another great university, "A liberal education absolutely requires that every English-speaking person should have a knowledge of French and German also; for it is from the French and Germans that in these days we receive the most important contributions to literary and physical science." [32]

I now pass to my second answer to the question "Why do we teach modern languages," which is, — *On account of their disciplinary value.* Here I must first of all guard against a misunderstanding. Mental discipline cannot be understood as something separate or separable from mental activity — every kind of mental activity, and hence the acquisition of any kind of useful knowledge, yields discipline. "The connection and interdependence of the two," says Professor W. D. Whitney, "are complete. No discipline without valuable knowledge;

1 Pezzi: "Aryan Philology."

all valuable knowledge available for discipline; the discipline in proportion to the amount and value of the knowledge acquired: these are fundamental truths in the theory of education. . . . To ask what knowledge is disciplinary is the question of ignorance. The true question to ask is, What kind of discipline does any given knowledge afford, to what does it conduct?"[10] Discipline, as we shall see farther on, depends rather upon method than upon subject-matter; for even if we follow Professor Laurie and distinguish between *discipline* and *training*, and say that the mind is disciplined by fixing it on the formal or abstract, and trained by occupation with the real or concrete, it will be found that each branch of study has its formal and its real side, and it is a question of method which side is to be emphasized. Language, for example, may be taught "as a concrete subject; that is to say, with special reference to the substance of thought," in which case the pupil's mind is carried through processes of thinking, and is thereby *trained;* or it may be studied with reference to "the *relations* of the word-vestment," in which case the mind deals with the formal, the abstract, the grammatical, and thereby is *disciplined.* ([12] Lectures II. and IV.) It goes without saying that the true method has to provide for both.

I need not dwell upon the disciplinary value of language-study in general; it is self-evident, since language is the instrument which renders all mental power effective, "the medium by which our thinking processes are carried on." The subject of my discussion calls only for a brief presentation of the *relative* disciplinary value of *living foreign* languages.

Mental discipline, in any higher sense, implies continued effort and use of the judgment. Therefore, a special disciplinary power has been claimed for the ancient languages because they are so *difficult.* But this superior difficulty is by no means conceded by those who, having acquired a thorough and tolerably complete knowledge of both ancient and modern

languages, have investigated the question of their relative difficulty. The distinguished classical scholar Madwig has recently been quoted by a committee of the Norwegian Diet as an authority for the superior pedagogical value of Latin and Greek; and to what better authority could one appeal? Yet Madwig does not claim for these languages a greater intrinsic disciplinary value or logical structure, but he attributes their special educational value to the circumstance that they are more foreign to us and cannot be acquired from others by mere practice.[23] The same point had been made earlier by Beneke. In other words, the ancient languages, when studied thoroughly, yield better intellectual results than living languages taught superficially.

According to Beneke, a profound thinker and one of the ablest defenders of ancient classical studies, Greek and Latin are decidedly more difficult than French and English;[22] but it is only too evident that his conception of the *aims* and *methods* of the study of French, as compared with those of Latin and Greek, is very low. So much has been written on the comparative pedagogical value of the ancient and the modern languages, that a bibliography of the literature would fill a small volume. (See, e.g., [29] p. 375, and [30] p. 506.) But as far as my knowledge of the literature goes, it is only in recent times that men have renounced the unnecessary task of proving that little French, poorly taught, is not equal to much Latin, well taught. Beneke does not believe that the "outward elements" of Greek and Latin possess much or any educational power; yet it is these elements that are often so highly praised as means of mental gymnastics! As to ancient literature, it is, in his judgment, superior to modern in grand simplicity and beauty of form, but far inferior in richness and sublimity of thought. It is especially adapted to the young. "The educated *man*," he says, "will, as a rule, derive richer and more vigorous food from German and English authors; . . . but this richer and more vigorous food is not

yet suitable for the young." ([22] II., p. 122.) A similar thought has been expressed by an American scholar of our own day, who says, "The study of modern life and the language in which it is crystallized, is not milk for babes, but meat for strong men." [9]

Professor Bernhard Schmitz, in his *Encyclopädie des philologischen Studiums der modernen Sprachen*, admits the greater difficulty of Latin and Greek grammar, but does not consider the study of grammar the principal difficulty in learning a language, but rather the wealth of the language itself, especially the phraseology; and with respect to this he claims all languages are equally difficult.[21] Others who have made comparisons in the same direction do not even concede greater grammatical difficulties to the ancient languages. And it would, indeed, be no easy matter to show why to comprehend the delicate shades in the use of tenses and moods in French "does not demand as severe and high an exercise of the discriminating faculty as to comprehend the same in Latin, or even in Greek;" [17] or why the correct use of the German prepositions does not call for as strict attention as that of the Latin and Greek prepositions; or why, in translating, "the powers of analysis and synthesis are not as much needed, and as much cultivated, by a thorough mastery of the German as of the Greek." [16] Does not a language like the French, which requires for an exhaustive, though brief treatment of the definite article twenty-six pages and forty-two different heads, and the conjugation of which contains forty-five more forms than the Latin, [37] offer sufficient opportunity for mental discipline? Dr. Wilhelm Schrader, Professor of Pedagogy in the University of Halle, justly ascribes eminent disciplinary value, both formal and real, to the study of French, if properly pursued. ([28] pp. 509–512.)

Professor Babbitt, of Columbia College, who has had experience in teaching ancient and modern languages, has examined in detail the advantages to be derived from the

pursuit of either, and comes to the conclusion that the discipline in both cases is equally valuable: he introduces, however, the question of *pace*, and believes that the opportunities for discipline lie at a more advanced stage in the modern languages than in the ancient; so that a modern language student, to gain the same amount of discipline, must go over more ground than the student of Latin and Greek; and for this the course of study and the method must provide.[9]

We find that in every case where the disciplinary value of modern language study is depreciated, the reason is to be found in an unfair comparison in which the *method* is lost sight of: "Just in proportion as methods have been bettered and the true spirit of linguistic training developed, the modern languages have risen higher in the scale of potent agencies for mind-culture."[11]

While feeling entirely free from any desire to detract from the merits of ancient language study as a means of higher education, we cannot but recognize the fact that our age is fast outgrowing the belief in any miraculous power of discipline peculiar to Latin and Greek. This change of opinion is going on in all civilized countries.[14]

Before leaving this question, it may be well to enter a general protest against the false assumption that the more difficult study always yields the greater mental discipline. If such were the case, other languages would be far ahead of any we have been considering; as, for example, the Nahuatl of old Mexico, the verb of which has eight hundred and sixty-five regularly derived forms, or the Otchipwé, in which every verb is capable of eight million variations.[14] And since the difficulty for the learner increases as the teacher deviates from the processes suggested by psychological laws, it would follow that, the poorer the teaching, the greater the discipline. But the truth is, there is scarcely anything hard for the average pupil, if the ideas are properly presented.[9]

The opinion may be held by some that, while the modern

languages are valuable for general mental discipline, they cannot furnish that special philological training resulting from the advanced study of Latin and Greek. But the least acquaintance with the history of the growth of such languages as the English, German, and French, and with the literature and methods of modern philology, must convince any one that such a view is untenable. "The wealth of material they [the modern languages] offer for philological training and historical investigation is becoming more appreciated every day." [11] "Had we nothing else with yet stronger recommendations to apply to," says Professor W. D. Whitney, "the German and French, especially the former, would answer to us all the essential disciplinary purposes of philological study; as, indeed, to many they are and must be made to answer those purposes. As the case stands, they are among the indispensable parts of a disciplinary education." [10]

If we apply to the study of living languages the test of systematic psychology, it appears that there is not a single mental activity which is not called into play and stimulated in the pursuit of this study, if properly taught, beginning at the foot of the scale, with sensation, up to the highest uses of the reasoning power and the judgment. But such inquiry into the influence of modern language study upon special mental activities involves necessarily the question of methods, upon which it depends. I will therefore pass to the second question: —

### HOW SHOULD WE TEACH THE MODERN LANGUAGES?

The number of possible methods of teaching languages is infinite. The text-books may be counted by thousands: a bibliography, doubtless incomplete, of French grammars alone, published between the years 1500 and 1800, includes six hundred and fifty titles.[24] A large proportion of such works bears the sub-title "A New Method." And if we take into account the various uses made of the same text-book by

different teachers, the actual number of different methods of teaching, it would seem, must be legion. Many of the methods advocated or practised by eminent educators in the past have more than an historical interest to the teacher of to-day : the views of men like Erasmus, Melanchthon, Ratich, Comenius, Locke, the Jesuit teachers, of Jacotot, Hamilton, Marcel, Prendergast, Heness, Sauveur, and others, are suggestive and stimulating, and the history of their methods is instructive. But in all the literature of this class we do not find the true answer to our question " How should we teach the modern languages ? " We must give it from our own standpoint, in the light of the knowledge and experience of the present age, being guided in the main by two considerations : *The method, that is, the " way," must lead to the end in view, and it must be in harmony with the laws of mind-growth.* The ultimate test of every method must be the psychological. Without it we are liable to commit the gravest errors and not be aware of them ; mere practical results cannot be considered as decisive : the question how the results were obtained is of the utmost importance.

The task of learning a language consists in the acquisition of the *material* (vocabulary, phraseology, idioms) and the mastery of the *principles* or rules which govern the use of the material (inflections, syntax). If we attack the material first, i.e., the living language itself, we follow the *analytical* method; we begin, for instance, with a printed page or sentence, or a spoken sentence, and by analysis study the parts and their relations. If, on the other hand, we attack first the principles governing the use of the various parts of speech and their combinations, we proceed *synthetically*, constructing the language, i.e., the sentence, representing the unit of language, out of its elements, according to certain rules. The former method may also be called the practical, and the latter the theoretical, or grammar method. Then we may begin with either one of these two methods, and soon pass to the

other, and combine the two, so that we have, in addition, the *analytico-synthetic* and the *synthetico-analytic* methods. (It should be remarked that the terms analytic and synthetic may also be applied to the language-material, instead of to the process; in that case the meanings of the terms synthetic method and analytic method are reversed, the former denoting the method dealing with language in its synthetic form, the latter the method dealing with language in its analyzed, decomposed form. Thus Henry Sweet speaks of "the synthetic methods of the Middle Ages, by which sentences were grasped as wholes, not *analyzed* and *put together* like pieces of mosaic work.")[27]

I have set down as the principal aim in the teaching of modern languages, their *use* as a means of literary culture and of information in various departments of knowledge. Such use presupposes first of all the ability to *read* the languages.

Psychology teaches that the mind proceeds from a knowledge of "wholes" to that of their parts (analysis), and from the concrete to the abstract. We are, then, forcibly pointed to the *analytical* and *analytico-synthetic* methods; simple reading, not systematic grammar, forms the first step. An *elementary* grammar method, with plenty of illustrations in the foreign language, is not, however, to be condemned, since it lends itself to the analytical way of procedure. Though we care at the start more for the printed than for the spoken language, *pronunciation* is not to be neglected (as some methods demand), because the beginner will attach *some* sound-image (*Gehörsvorstellung*) to the printed word, whether we wish it or not; and the only safe way of preventing *false* sound-images from fixing themselves in his mind is to teach him the *correct* sounds. Thus, the knowledge of language begins, where all knowledge begins, with *sensation:* audible and visible signs, acquired through the senses of hearing and of sight, form the basis of clear *percepts*. It should be noted that, in the study of foreign languages, the foreign word, phrase, or sen-

tence, as the case may be, becomes the *object* of sense-perception; the contents of these, as well as their names in the mother tongue, are supposed to be known, at least approximately; the foreign sign, or form of expression, for a familiar idea becomes a *new object of perception.*

The student desirous of learning to read a foreign language for the sake of an accurate understanding of the subject-matter (and this is what our purpose necessarily implies), must translate into his own vernacular until he learns to understand the foreign without translation.

Psychology teaches that the mind advances to new knowledge on the basis of what it already knows.

Hence, the foreign language is to be studied by comparison with the mother tongue; *translation* into English, therefore, is to be begun at the very outset, not to be avoided, as some methods demand.

From *perception*, i.e., knowing what is present (to sight or hearing), the mind passes to *conception*, i.e., knowing what is not present to the senses: words and phrases must be in the pupil's *mind.* Hence, such parts of the lesson as the pupils are expected to retain in memory must be given by them for their English equivalents: *Translation into the foreign language* is necessary from the beginning; it will at first be confined to the rendering of phrases and sentences, but will have to be extended to the translation of entire paragraphs in advanced classes, in order to afford opportunity for the application of general principles.

Mental discipline — one of our aims in teaching living languages — is impossible without the exercise of the higher activities of the mind, of the reasoning power and of the judgment. Again, no accurate and reliable knowledge of a language, such as its use for the purposes of culture and information demands, can be gained without as tudy of the principles and laws governing its use. The study of *grammar*, therefore, is indispensable. We now proceed, in accordance

with the laws of mind-growth, from *simple concepts* to *general concepts*, to classes with certain general characteristics, from the concrete to the abstract. "We must base all generalization on the particular and concrete, which alone gives the general and abstract any meaning. Rules of syntax are generalizations, and they are to be constructed out of the initiatory reading-lesson by the pupil, with the help of the master."[12] Or, at least, all general rules are to be studied in close connection with concrete examples, and the reading-lesson should furnish these. This calls for *reasoning* and *judgment*.

The reasoning out the meaning of words from the context constitutes another valuable means of mental discipline. "This is not blind guessing; it is legitimate reasoning from the known to the unknown." ([25] vi., 60,61; v., 10,11.) Methods like Hamilton's and Jacotot's, founded upon the use of interlinear or lateral translations, are in general not to be recommended. The dictionary should be used, but not abused. *Sight-reading* in the class-room should receive due attention.

Translation requires the abstraction of the thought from the concrete form in which it is expressed, in order to vest it with a new form. *Discrimination*, both between different forms of *expression* and between various shades of meaning and *thought*, is constantly needed, and *no other method of studying the mother tongue is, in this respect, equal to this practice of translating from a foreign language*. But any method which discards the use of the mother tongue, as, for example, the so-called "Natural Method," is of inferior educational value.

Our aim in teaching modern languages implies a *ready use* of them; this means, the pupil must form the *habit of applying* his knowledge. The laws of habit (psycho-physiological) show that repeated action and essentially uniform method of action are necessary to form habitual action.[31] "Every acquisition in the shape of words or generalizations, accord-

ingly, must be turned to use, *from the beginning.*" The most important words, phrases, and rules must be used *frequently;* rare words and expressions will have to be passed over more rapidly. Every work read for the purpose of language-study ought to furnish a number (say from fifty to a hundred) of useful phrases and idioms to be firmly fixed in the mind. This should largely be done by oral exercises. *Oral exercises* provide the best means of acquiring *promptness* in the use of the linguistic material and in the application of rules. This practice is also due those members of a class who wish to *converse* in the foreign language; and experience teaches that a considerable degree of fluency in speaking may be attained by this method, if teacher and pupil follow it conscientiously through the course. The general method precludes, however, the teaching of conversation for special business purposes, or for foreign travel, which would involve the learning of special vocabularies and technical phraseologies.

*Copious reading* is another means of rendering the pupil, through *practice,* familiar with the common material of the language, and with the laws governing its use. It is equivalent to a constant review of what is of most frequent occurrence in the language. Besides, it has been well said, in the study of *modern* languages the student should use the *Will* "in keeping up the pace, rather than struggling with difficulties that are beyond his powers." (⁹ p. 54.)

*Correct use* of the language is always to be insisted upon. This, especially in the oral exercises, makes *concentration* imperative and serves in an eminent degree as a discipline of the *Will.* At the same time, the *Will* is stimulated by the attractiveness of the exercise. A superficial conversation-method which relies upon imitation alone, and neglects the application of general laws to special cases, does not strengthen the will-power.

Practice in the use of the foreign language cultivates the *Imagination.* The imagination is active in reproducing what

has been acquired; it "selects, modifies, arranges, combines." A pure *reading*-method, like Marcel's, is less effective in this respect. The reading and translating of foreign authors is of the highest value to the development of the imaginative faculty, and conversation helps to lend vividness to the pictures in the mind.

I have not mentioned the cultivation of the *Memory*. It is evident from the foregoing considerations that the study of modern languages offers wide opportunity, not only for the exercise of verbal memory, but especially for the rational use of this important power, by means of association, comparison, discrimination. Even in the acquisition of the vocabulary of the foreign language, all these aids may be made use of by observing the formation and derivation of words from common roots, etc.; and there is a still wider use for them in the study of idioms and phrases, where the reasoning power should always be appealed to.

Further, in the study of authors, the imagination may be made a powerful aid to memory; as, for example, when, with the situation and the characters, their expressions and conversations are recalled. And while the introduction of philological matter in elementary classes is, on the whole, to be avoided, it affords not unfrequently a valuable help to memory. In like manner, the principles of the historical development of language may be legitimately used to assist the memory and the understanding. Thus, Paul's "Principles of the History of Language," is full of suggestions to the teacher.

Methods which, like Prendergast's, or its more modern representative, the *Meisterschaft System*, reduce the study of a language for many weeks and months to the memorizing of one hundred words, and to ringing the changes on sentences formed with this limited vocabulary, leave little room for a rational cultivation of memory. There need be very little mechanical memorizing when the method I have outlined is followed.

Since literary culture is one of the ends we have in view, the method of teaching must make ample provision for the cultivation of literary taste. The literature read must not merely be treated as a means of learning the language, but it must also be studied from the *æsthetic* standpoint, and open to the student occasional glimpses into the field of comparative literature.

The study of the best literary productions in a foreign language ought also to lead to certain *ethical* results. "The literature of a people reflects its character, its manners and morals, its history; to study the same means, in a certain sense, to share in the intellectual, moral, and political life of the nation, which we esteem the more, the better we know it."[33] The study of modern languages ought, therefore, to have an "eminently conciliatory" influence. No student of the literature and life of various nations can fail to see how generally these misunderstand and misjudge each other, and how true is the judgment of an eminent writer with which I will close: "The relation of the various peoples of the earth to the supreme interests of life, to God, virtue, and immortality, may be investigated up to a certain point, but they can never be compared to one another with absolute strictness and certainty. The more plainly in these matters our evidence seems to speak, the more carefully must we refrain from unqualified assumptions and rash generalizations. This remark is especially true with regard to our judgment on questions of morality. It may be possible to indicate many contrasts and shades of difference among different nations, but to strike the balance of the whole is not given to human insight. The ultimate truth with respect to character, the conscience, and the guilt of a people, remains forever a secret; if only for the reason that its defects have another side, where they reappear as peculiarities or even as virtues."[1]

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# COLLEGIATE INSTRUCTION IN THE ROMANCE LANGUAGES.[1]

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It can be said without exaggeration that the year 1891 marks in the United States a definite step in the progress of modern language instruction. For the first time in the history of our colleges, the demand for men who have pursued the study of foreign living languages — especially French — as a profession, has far exceeded the supply; and all indications point to an increase in the demand. And in this year, also, have instructors in modern languages, for the first time since the scientific development of these studies, been invited to present their experience and their views before a public audience.[2]

To be sure, there has been much discussion on the place and purpose of foreign languages in our educational system, both by educators who have appeared before the public at large, and by instructors who have addressed their colleagues in the privacy of the scientific associations. But the instructor did not appeal directly to the public until February of this year, when Professor Elliott of the Johns Hopkins University discussed before a Baltimore audience the methods of university work in the Romance languages.[3] To-night, here in Cleveland,

1 An address delivered at Cleveland, Nov. 17, 1891.

2 When George Ticknor was inducted into the Smith Professorship at Harvard, Aug. 10, 1819, he gave an inaugural address. An extract is given in vol. i., pp. 320, 321, of "Life, Letters and Journals of George Ticknor," Boston, 1875, 2 vols., 8vo.

3 See "University Work in the Romance Languages," by A. Marshall Elliott, Ph. D., Baltimore, 1891.

it is the collegiate work in those languages which occupies our attention. You will pardon me digressions into the Germanic field also; since what is true of the Romance is often more strikingly true of the Teutonic.

Looking back over the history of modern foreign language instruction in this country, we find that early in the century French already had a footing. This preference was due, no doubt, to our early political relations with France, and to the use of French as the language of diplomacy. Consequently, soon after the War of 1812, the Smith Professorship of French and Spanish was founded at Harvard College, and in 1816 George Ticknor was called to be its incumbent. He accepted and was inaugurated in 1819. His assistants were foreigners. Somewhat later, German, which came into prominence both through its use in scientific research and through the fame of Goethe and the Romantic School, was also recognized at Harvard, and in 1825 Dr. Follen was called as instructor. While not attaining the eminence of Ticknor, the personality of this German exile was none the less strongly stamped on the institution which honored him.

Other colleges soon followed the example set by Harvard, but much less effectively. Many offered instruction in French and German; few, if any, in Spanish or Italian. The course in German was, on the whole, more systematic and thorough. Students desired it as a means to advanced work at home and abroad, and the teachers, either Americans or Germans, were better adapted to the exigencies of the classrooms of those days. Instruction in French, on the other hand, suffered both from the lack of interest among the students and from the make-up of the teaching-force, generally non-resident and out of touch with the spirit of their surroundings. And yet, perhaps in both languages, more actual benefit to American education was derived from the private classes which were formed outside of the college, but in the college community, and through which the members of the

academic staff were brought into new worlds of thought and opinion. Of such a nature, and peculiarly successful, was the work performed by Karl Rüger on the Western Reserve.[1]

This condition of affairs lasted for quite half a century, down through the Civil War and beyond that struggle. The great industrial activity, which stirred America as well as Europe from 1857 to 1873, aided in engrossing the public mind in other than educational matters. During this period the colleges increased but little either in students or in endowment. The deviations in their methods of instruction and in their curriculum were slight. When, therefore, the community turned somewhat from politics and business, and gave its attention again to its institutions of learning, it was both surprised and irritated. The nation had changed; the colleges had not changed. To alleviate its disappointment the body politic promptly voted institution and instructor theoretical and unpractical, and the college professor saw his former influence speedily declining.

But the national impatience did not content itself with criticism and abuse. Substitutes for colleges were sought and discovered, and among them one which has peculiarly affected the position of foreign languages, the Summer School. Private schools of language-teaching, employing the conversational method, had existed since 1866. It was the merit of the Summer School, conceived not far from the borders of Lake Erie, and with a religious purpose in view, to give a prominent place to modern languages in its curriculum, and to borrow from the private schools the conversational method. The effect of this popular movement on our colleges soon became apparent. The most progressive educators saw in French and German a means of connecting their institutions with the public. It was Harvard College again which led the way. In 1874 she required for admission an examination in English; in 1875

[1] For an understanding of modern language work between 1830 and 1860 I am especially indebted to the late Dr. Seymour of Adelbert College.

an examination in German or French. Other modifications accompanied these changes. Harvard's action has once more been followed by many of our larger colleges.

Close on this concession to public sentiment came a movement from an entirely different quarter, which has had a no less beneficial influence on the study of modern languages. In 1876 the Johns Hopkins University was opened. In its undergraduate department French and German were allowed, in its requirements for admission, as a substitute for Greek in the B.A. course. Its graduate department, modelled on the German University, included a three-years' course in both Romance and Germanic languages. While the aims of these courses were mainly philological and linguistic, adapted to special research, yet the high standard they set, by demanding from their students a larger and more thorough knowledge of the origin and growth of the language, elevated the aims of collegiate instruction and gave the collegiate instructor a career which aroused his ambition. Furthermore, the head of the department of Romance languages, Professor Elliott, conceived the notion of extending the benefits derived from the university work beyond the limited number of his own students. Mainly owing to his initiative, the Modern Language Association of America was founded, in December, 1883, by which all instructors, both collegiate and preparatory, were given a common rallying-point. To supplement the publications of the Association, and to offer an opportunity for original work, as well as for reviews and text-book notices, the same instructor began, in January, 1886, the publication of the *Modern Language Notes.*

Thus modern languages in this country have both an organization and a defence; and under the impetus acquired in this manner, they have progressed more in the past five years than in any preceding generation. The methods of instruction, also, and the relation of modern languages to the college curriculum, have been discussed so often and so thoroughly,

that it is safe to say a general line of action has been finally agreed upon. While the details may be considerably modified in the near future, the principles of study and teaching seem fixed for some time ahead.

When we consider, then, in the first place, the advantages and object of our profession, we must call to mind the nature of the institution in which we work — the American college. Of late the community seems somewhat confused regarding the province and scope of the college. This confusion is due in part, no doubt, to recent discussions on education which have caught the eye of the public, but probably more to the entrance of new studies into the college curriculum. Of these new studies the Romance and Germanic languages form a considerable part. For this reason the attitude towards the college idea of the instructors in those languages becomes of interest. If that attitude is to be judged by their articles and discussions, the conclusion is evident that they stand by the tradition of the purpose of a college course. While the subjects pursued in college may be greatly increased in number and extent by the legitimate demands of modern society, they believe that the character of college work must remain the same as it has been: the training and strengthening of the mental faculties, the broadening of the judgment, and the discipline of the reasoning powers. And that therefore the field of collegiate education does not include special investigation, on the one hand, or, on the other, the learning of a trade. The college should not encroach on the professional school, on the business college, or on the school of applied science.

If we turn back twenty years to the curriculum of the average college of good standing, we find there a far more restricted scheme of study than we do at the present day, while the number of years in the course remains the same. It is evident, then, that the additions of the past two decades, chiefly modern languages and natural science, have gained their place at the expense of the former occupants. In the

case of modern languages these occupants were mainly Greek and Latin. Now, as regards the wisdom of this displacement of the classics we have not to argue. It was begun before a body of trained instructors in modern languages were to be found in this country, and has been carried on with very little consultation of them after they did come into being. They are not accountable for the present situation, and are not satisfied with it. But it exists, and they must make the best of it.[1]

With this situation in mind, it is clear that the first duty of modern language instructors is to preserve, so far as possible, the advantages derived from the study of the displaced languages, Greek and Latin. Now these advantages are: the classification of facts by the association of things related; the broadening of the judgment, brought about by the necessity of linguistic distinctions and the introduction into phases of thought different from those of our surroundings; and the reflex action of translation on the ability to command one's own vernacular.[2] The practice which the memory receives from the accumulation of a vocabulary and the acquirement of grammatical forms, obviously true of both ancient and modern languages, needs here no discussion.

To apply the first advantage, the classification of facts, to the Romance languages. Here the latter fall below the ancient. Their syntax is less elaborate, and in the modern written sentence there is greater elasticity. Yet considerable material for this feature of mental discipline is at hand, and

1 This statement is not to be considered contradictory of what has been said above regarding the conclusions reached by the modern language men. Those conclusions are probably final so far as methods are concerned. But they apply strictly to the present situation only, a situation which may be indefinitely prolonged. Personally I hold to the view that the study of French and German should precede the study of Latin and Greek in the preparatory and public schools: first, because they are simpler in construction; second, because their literature is adapted to all grades. It is absurd, to say the least, that a pupil should be made to read the Iliad or the Æneid before he knows even the meaning of art; not to mention the waste of time involved by the present order of language study.

2 See "How to Use Modern Languages as a Means of Mental Discipline," by E. H. Babbitt. Publications of the Modern Language Association, vol. vi., pp. 52-63.

every-day examples are the distinctions in the use of French tenses, and the various offices performed by prepositions, the substitute for the case endings of classical inflection — to cite only the most general. Less inferior, however, are the Romance languages in regard to the second benefit, — the effect of linguistic study on the judgment. Apart from the initiation of the student into new modes of thought, to be considered later on, the construction of the Romance period, French, Italian, or Spanish, presents many obstacles, which are often the more perplexing because they appear of easy solution. The shades of meaning expressed by the relative position of words, as of adverbial connectives and adjectives, demand constant discrimination on the part of the translator. When we add to problems of this nature the greater range of reading, made possible by the simple syntax and the likeness of the Romance vocabulary to the English, through which the student comes in contact with a greater variety of expressions, of idioms, of proverbs, where the common-sense of generations is condensed, it will be seen that the balance does not incline so strongly to the side of the ancient languages. Nor should, in this connection, elementary facts in etymology be overlooked, when they are necessary to explain such confusion as arises from the double service performed by the Romance preposition *a*, representing both *ad* and *ab* of the Latin, or the difference in meaning of the French word, whose form is the same as that of the English, a difference due to the middle ground which it occupies in the line of descent from the Latin. All such difficulties, far from being passed over in the work of the class-room, should be brought forward and emphasized by the instructor, with a view to the especial training required.

In the third advantage arising from language study, the command over one's vernacular gained by the various mental processes set in motion by the act of translation, the Romance languages are not inferior to the ancient. It may be ques-

tioned whether, in fact, they are not superior. Rapid reading gives much more practice in rendering. The mind is on the alert to vary the monotony of the English version by the use of synonyms, of parallel idioms, of inversions. In the modern language the written period does not vary so widely from the forms of conversation. There results, as a consequence, a greater range of sentiment and phrase, from the familiar dialogue of friends to the polished period of the essayist. Often excellence of style in the foreign author incites to rivalry in the translation, for we can, without much effort, appreciate the taste and refinement of a tongue so near to our own as the French.

With this question of style is closely connected that of ideas. Admitting that the works of antiquity, which have come down to us, reflect the thought and tendencies of the whole people, yet the civilization of the Greek and Roman world, its mental, moral, and social environment, is so utterly alien to our modern existence in a New World, as to render doubtful the success of the best students in gaining from ancient literature, during a college course, a satisfactory conception of it. The influence of Christianity, subtle and permeating, has placed manifold barriers between classical ideals and those of our own times. Compare Racine, for instance, with his Greek models. On the other hand, the spirit and opinions of Romance and Germanic writers are intelligible to the American mind. They are discussing subjects which affect our existence as well as theirs, and from standpoints of view new to us. We therefore receive not only the profit which comes from the treatment of living problems by contemporaries, whose surroundings differ somewhat from ours, but also the mental discipline acquired by the translation of these shades of opinion — keener appreciation in thought, and finer distinctions in rendering.

So much for the educational legacies of the ancient to the modern tongues. Considerable as these are, they hardly equal

the advantages peculiar to the latter alone, or at least which are of far greater importance in the latter. Let us choose the most general and apparent. The first, as already intimated, is the improvement of the judgment by initiation into European phases of contemporaneous thought. Without in any way holding in light esteem the lessons of practical life derived from the study of the past, we are safe in assuming that, after all, our chief interest lies in the tendencies of our own times, the development of the society to which we belong. While this is true of the world at large, it is pre-eminently true of the United States, that compound of humanity, where the body politic has absorbed so many elements unknown to our Anglo-Saxon progenitors. To understand the traditions and bent of these elements is our great concern, and there is no more direct way to this understanding than by the study of the literatures in which they are represented. It is history, then, in the guise of language, and the history of the society of to-day.

In the Middle Ages the study of mankind was comparatively simple. No other than mediæval thought demanded consideration, and that thought was practically uniform throughout Christendom. With the Renaissance and the Reformation came new conceptions from another world, and new springs of action, which gradually did away with the old. But the movements attending the French Revolution and the rise of the Romantic school in literature and art revived again the study of mediæval times, fused their spirit with that of antiquity, and brought the masses in contact with both epochs by the evolution of democracy. Whatever may be said of the power of single intellects at the present day, it is evident that the stock of ideas within reach of the majority of the human race is increasing with every revolution of the earth. And the individual who remains in ignorance of the thought of foreign nations during the last hundred years, has no power within himself to understand his own environment or

to forecast that of the generation following. Education has become cosmopolitan, broad as well as deep.

What is true of the individual is true of the nation, the aggregate of individuals. If we look at the civilized world to-day, we see that its universal effort is to bring together its inhabitants. The whole trend of invention is to that end. In towns, horse railroads give way to electric. Between communities, steam communication by land and water is being perfected with the sole purpose of making better time. And the world grows daily smaller. Nations are becoming neighbors, and hence competitors. Already the misfortunes or mistakes of one redound to the immediate profit of the others. A century ago transportation was slow, inventions were few, men's minds worked leisurely. Ideas were carefully considered before they were given to the public, and the public of that time was the thinker's own countrymen, who had abundant opportunity to reap the first fruits of his meditations. To-day it has become a national necessity to learn immediately the scientific discoveries and the economical purposes of all mankind. The people which neglects to study, and to imitate when expedient, the plans of other peoples, falls behind in the struggle for existence. And what holds good of material life holds equally good of the intellectual.

The second advantage which the study of foreign literatures can bring to us Americans, does not pertain to the domain of practical existence, yet appeals no less to national pride. It relates to our own literature; not to its substance, but to its form. It is the nature of a new people to have ideas in abundance, a desire to immediately impart them to the world, and, on the other hand, to have but an imperfect command over language, the vehicle of expression. What is lacking is refinement and taste, a cultivation of the æsthetic side — style. In our fine arts, as painting and music, the conscious lack of *technique* forces our artists to emigrate for long periods to centres of skill and taste in foreign lands. The beneficial

results of this willingness to learn from abroad are especially manifest in the great progress of American architecture, which now presents a distinctively national type. So in literature, speaking broadly, we have the thought, but the form escapes us. Nor shall we reach a period of literary development until some correct standard has been established which shall serve as intermediary between our authors and the public. *Technique* must first be learned, and here, as in the arts, there are no better models than the Continental, and in particular the French. That our leading writers are awake to this quality of French literature, has been often illustrated in the past few months by the translations which have come from their pens.[1]

And not only in the structure of the period can we learn much from French literature. In the plan of a literary work we lack too often the harmony of proportions and the clearness of outline which are essential to its continued favor with the public. While this is true of all departments of letters, there is no branch in which our weak constructive power is more clearly seen than in our drama. As a people we seem to feel the dramatic instinct to an unusual degree. In the fusion of the nations taking place on this continent there must be the foundation laid for the greatest development of theatrical composition ever known. Yet no one attends the performance of our more serious plays without being surprised at the combination of superabundant material with a most puerile and crude conception of the playwright's

[1] I am aware of the stumbling-blocks which an intimate acquaintance with foreign literatures places in the way of style in one's vernacular. It is true that they always cultivate taste. It is also true that the moment the student arrives at the point where he reads a foreign language without translating it to himself — the ideal of college instruction, and also the only way to appreciate all the excellencies of foreign literature — at that moment he begins to weaken his command over his own tongue. But a college course only is under discussion here, and where that leads, as it does in but few institutions, beyond this limit, constant caution on the part of the instructor will tend to diminish the danger. The same objection holds good, of course, against advanced work in composition.

art. Taste and elementary principles of stage construction are alike wanting. But here, again, we notice that our younger authors are imitating the shorter pieces of the French theatre, and may thus lead the way to a higher standard.

To sum up, then, this division of our subject. The purpose of collegiate instruction in the Romance languages is not alone the mental training which can be derived from that instruction, but also the education along social and æsthetic lines which a knowledge of foreign literatures affords us. To profit by this general culture the student should be required to apply to his own surroundings the thought of the texts in hand. And he should be constantly reminded that in these texts he has artistic productions which owe their form, not to accidental inspiration, but to certain laws of expression and construction. So that every college in the land may become a living force in the social and literary development of the nation.

There remain to be considered the curriculum of the modern language course and the routine of class-room instruction. As regards the curriculum, it follows from the position already taken, that the texts used should be chosen from among those which bear most strongly on the present social conditions, and which excel in thought and style, not forgetting the most important dramatic works. In French these requirements are met by the authors of the Romantic and realistic schools of this century. In Spanish and Italian, owing to the small quantity of good contemporaneous material, it will be necessary to supplement recent literature by "Don Quixote" and the "Divina Comedia," productions of a universal bearing. It is also to be borne in mind that in the literature of this century is found a larger vocabulary and a greater range of grammatical constructions. Composition, after the first stages, should be based, so far as possible, on the reading. When the modern tongue is learned the student can turn back with profit to past periods of the language, where the chief interest

is that of literary history. Literature should be the object of advanced work in college. Philological research belongs rather to the professional school.

The methods of modern language-teaching have been the subject of debate for many years, and still differ according to the instructor's conception of the college course. The growing opinion seems to be the conservative one, or perhaps radical, according to the standpoint of view. At the beginning of the course too much attention cannot be given to the forms of the language and its pronunciation. Morphology and syntax must be thoroughly understood before the thought of the sentence can be rightly appreciated. And here the elements of composition can be made to serve as an auxiliary. Since grammar has no life apart from the language, reading comes in properly at the very outset. At the same time should commence the exercise in pronunciation. For in the study of literature, which includes the study of style, it is essential to know not only the thought of the written period, but how that period sounds. Here the aid of elementary phonetics can be brought in, and the eye made to supplement the ear. But in acquiring pronunciation we must bear in mind that it is, like composition, a means to reach the goal, and not the goal itself. That goal is education by the study of literature. The training of the physical organs includes too small an element of education to consume any considerable part of a college course, and the powers of the mind are not noticeably increased by the repetition of ordinary conceptions in tongues other than our own. With a picked body of advanced students the instructor may be able to use the foreign language to advantage in the class-room, but where skill in speaking has a commercial value, and is therefore an end in itself, the professional school or the business college should supply the time and training. The advantage to be derived from an advanced course in composition can also be fittingly called in question in considering collegiate instruction.

Coming under the head of method, but rarely employed by the instructor, is the aid in class-work which can be derived from charts and photographs. Maps showing the physical features of the country, plans of towns, views of scenery, of streets, of buildings, are of great service in introducing the student into the surroundings of his author and in impressing on him the spirit of the narrative. We see how such material is the principal element in the study of archæology. But modern languages have the advantage, not only in the completeness of their art and nature, but also in the possibility of catching institutions and manners in their every-day activity, as a weekly market or a crowded thoroughfare. The scenery of Lake Geneva is still that described in "La Nouvelle Héloise." The main street of a French provincial town has not changed since the days of Eugénie Grandet; while Gothic cathedrals and Renaissance houses will still outlive many generations of poets and novelists. The library is the laboratory of the languages. Illustrations should be their apparatus. The ideal class-room is the one so arranged that the student, on crossing the threshold, should find himself transported to the country and customs of the people whose thoughts he is studying.

These, then, are the chief objects and methods of modern language work. In them is found much that is old and little that is new, and the new arises mainly from the historical epoch to which the studies apply. Far from weakening the mental powers of the individual by anticipating in college the commercial details of life, the instructors in modern languages insist on the careful cultivation of those powers. From the very nature of their profession they are brought to realize the necessity, in the world of business, of a trained intellect and a broad judgment, whether to meet the competition of other nations, or to lead the way to the prosperity of our own. They see plainly, by their daily contact with living problems of society, that the country has increasing need of a large body of thinkers who can grasp the general trend of

contemporaneous movements, and weigh carefully the influence of the part on the action of the whole. The time has passed when a few minds can sway the world's destinies. The complexity of our present civilization demands many masters who work in unison. The forces of nature which man has set free since the beginning of this century must be dominated by the human reason, disciplined to the highest point, if their liberty is not to prove fatal to society itself. And to supply men of quick thought and prompt action, who can see the moments of danger and meet them, should be the constant aim of our institutions of learning.

# HOW TO USE MODERN LANGUAGES AS A MEANS OF MENTAL DISCIPLINE.[1]

BY MR. E. H. BABBITT, COLUMBIA COLLEGE.

I COME before you this morning to represent the unornamental, prosaic side of our work — the undercurrent, so to speak. Pedagogical papers have been read and discussed before this Association till it would seem that little could be left to say in this department; yet I feel encouraged to present another, for the very reason that the discussion of these papers has been more active and universal than that of any other class of papers whatever. And I regard this as a most wholesome sign of our professional spirit. For no teacher ought ever to forget, however attractive he finds the search for the principle of the Germanic accentuation, or the meaning of the second part of "Faust," that he is not by profession *in the first place* a philologist or a man of letters, but a teacher, whose first duty is toward his pupils, and whose work is to apply whatever he can find in philology or literature to the task of supplying, to the best of his power, these bright young minds which come to him for instruction, with that which will most help them to fill their future place in the world. And so I ask you to listen to another chapter of prose, in confidence that, however much we may be interested — as I am sure we all are — in the "Stressed Vowels in Beowulf," or the "Spanish Pastoral Romances," every one who is worthy to be a member of this Association is eager for

[1] Read before the Modern Language Association of America, and reprinted with the permission of the author.

any new idea which will help him to do this important work in a better manner; and if I can present any such ideas, or start a discussion which shall bring them, I shall feel that the undercurrent has not come to the surface in vain.

I invite your attention, then, to a line of thought into which I have been drawn by observing the increasing extent to which, for practical reasons principally, the study of the modern languages is superseding the classics in our schools. Whatever opinion we may hold as to the advantage or disadvantage of this plan, we must recognize the fact; and it behooves us more than any other teachers to consider how we shall shape our instruction so as to do the most for our pupils under existing circumstances. This change is a part of a more general movement, that has not taken place without a great deal of active and even violent discussion, the outcome of which seems to strengthen the theory that no one thing is a *sine qua non* in education, but that a certain amount of work properly done by a certain faculty of the mind will give about the same increase of strength and readiness, whether the work be done in ancient or modern languages, or mathematics, or history, or science. The question is only the practical one of the adjustment of means to ends, and it ought to be a cause of congratulation to a broad-minded educator, to find that he has a larger latitude than was formerly believed possible, to shape his instruction more directly toward the practical needs of life, without fear that the quality of mind produced will be inferior in consequence.[1]

Our questions, then, are: What discipline is given by the study of ancient languages? Where the modern languages must take their place, can we attain the same ends in the same manner? If not, how far can we attain them? If not

[1] I do not wish to be understood as taking in any way a position of opposition to or disparagement of classical studies. I do believe that a man may have a liberal education without knowing the Latin or Greek languages; but I also firmly believe that there is no other so direct and convenient way to such an education as by their use.

in the same manner, what changes in method must we make ?

I wish to understand by mental discipline the exercise of some faculty of the mind, which results in increasing the power or readiness of that faculty. We used to hear more than we do now about discipline of the will. The idea was that it is good for a boy to do things that are hard for him, simply because they are hard; and the harder they are, the better for him. There is some truth in this view, but we are finding out that to a mind of average intelligence, if the ideas are properly presented in their right sequence, scarcely anything is hard. Pupils find difficulties in their studies because it is impossible for the teacher to follow their mental processes closely enough to see what their needs are, or oftener because he does not know what their needs are if he can follow them, or because the pupil is in a class which is going ahead faster than he is prepared to follow; in other words, the poorer the adjustment of means to ends in the instruction, the better the discipline for the pupil's will. I really believe there is some compensation to be found in this for the vast amount of poor teaching that is done in our institutions; but I incline to think that there is just as much discipline for the will, and of a more wholesome kind, in doing work which the student can do, and doing more of it — using the will in keeping up the pace, rather than in struggling with difficulties that are beyond one's powers.

Under my definition would come also the training of special faculties or groups of faculties for a special practical end; or, in other words, the cultivation of an art. This kind of training is not considered an essential part of a liberal education, and is not provided for at institutions whose only object is to give such education. Still, it is hard to draw the line in some cases, and say whether a study is to be reckoned in this class or not.

We all know how entirely a mere fluency in speaking a lan-

guage belongs to this class. It requires no higher order of intellect, and no more exercise of the judgment, to speak French or German, than to play the banjo; and both can be learned equally well in "six easy lessons." I am accustomed also to say sometimes that both are, for the average American citizen, of about equal importance; but this is only a jocular overstatement of a nevertheless very serious fact.[1]

Skill in reading a language is also an art, but one of a much more intellectual kind, calling for a great deal of exercise of the reasoning faculty, and rarely acquired satisfactorily until that faculty is well developed. It is this art which, on account of its practical value, is the primary object of most of our instruction in modern languages, and it is the fact that we have to give so much consideration to the art as such that makes the great difference between the work of instruction in the ancient and modern languages. I shall come back to this point later.

Of the faculties which we wish to strengthen on account of their universal application to all studies, the principal are the memory and the judgment. Of these the former is relatively much less important than formerly. At least we do not need quite the same kind of memory that our ancestors did, for while the memory of the relations of facts is quite as important as ever, that of the facts themselves can be more easily dispensed with, because we put all our facts in print nowadays.

The faculty which is by far the most important of the human mind, and which we most earnestly strive to develop and per-

1 I suspect that some things I said in the discussion of the paper are likely to give a wrong impression as to my position regarding the teaching of pronunciation. I always give a good deal of attention to the matter from the outset; explain the difficulties carefully, even going into the physiology of the subject when it will help, as it often will. I try to work in constant practice in pronouncing and listening, and insist on the same degree of accuracy in this as in translation, *as far as possible without special attempt at training the organs of the students.* I probably differ from some of my foreign-born colleagues in maintaining that this is as far as the ordinary circumstances allow us to go without taking time from more important work, and that the whole matter of pronunciation is of relative small practical importance in most cases.

fect in our pupils, is the faculty of judgment, or the reasoning faculty (I am not trying to be psychologically exact), the faculty whose perfection gives what we call a logical mind — a mind which has a ready perception of the relations of things, and is not likely to be misled by false reasoning.

For developing this faculty the value of language study has always been recognized, and it is safe to say that although other studies may also contribute to this object, they can never entirely take the place of language study. This is true because language is the medium by which our thinking processes are carried on. I will not say that all thinking is necessarily carried on in words, but as soon as we wish to communicate our thoughts to others we must use language. And we do not go far wrong when we accept a man's power in the use of language as the measure of his mental development. I do not refer now to conventional correctness or elegance of diction, but to the ability to say what is meant in an effective way. Many a rustic preacher or stump orator can express himself in words which may bring a smile to the face of the purist, but which convey unmistakably the conclusions of a reasoning power of no mean order. And in general we may say that as far as a person uses clear and forcible language, his thinking processes are also clear and direct. The converse may not be true; but in our dealings with our pupils we are practically obliged to assume that it is, because the only way we have of getting at what they think is through what they say.

Here, to my mind, is found a sufficient explanation of the facts that the examination in English for admission to college is so critical, and that the instruction in English in our common schools is so unsatisfactory. You can load a boy to the muzzle with facts and dates, and he will pass in history; be sure he understands all the problems in Wentworth, and he will pass in geometry; make him read all that Cæsar, Cicero, and Virgil have written, and he will pass in Latin; but let

him sit down for an hour to put his own thoughts on paper, and if his mind is too immature to enter college, there will be evidence of it on the paper when he goes. Hill's Rhetoric and practice in composition-writing will often do much towards removing disabilities in formal expression, and enough such work should be given to meet the needs of each case; but these things in themselves do no more to reach the bottom of the difficulty than other lines of study do. Often a boy who has failed in English will spend a year travelling in Europe, or in general study, without an hour of formal instruction in English, and come back next year and pass creditably, simply on account of a general advancement in maturity of mind during the year.

The same relations of things hold in the common schools; what we need there is not more hours devoted to formal instruction in English; this only touches the surface of the matter. Formal instruction there should be, enough to make sure that the pupils are reasonably free from faults and able to use the language properly in proportion to their years and intellectual development; but further than this the time is better spent on matter than on form. Every teacher should be incidentally a teacher of English, and whatever is learned ought to be learned in a logical and coherent form from the outset. Of course where no language but English is studied, a good share of time may well be given to the study of grammar and the analysis of language, which would come incidentally in connection with the study of other languages.

The most valuable thing in the way of discipline which comes from the study of a foreign language is its influence in improving the pupil's command of his own. Of course this means the improvement in general judgment and discrimination which is evinced by a finer linguistic sense, which again finds its expression through the ordinary medium of thought. We modern language teachers are more likely to overlook this most important point than our classical colleagues, be-

cause in our work the practical use of the language is so much more important than in theirs.

Let us now examine in detail the advantages which a person who has taken the ordinary Bachelor's degree has derived from the study of classics. Aside from the discipline of the will, which comes from any hard work, we find the following: (1) His memory for facts has been strengthened by committing paradigms and learning a new vocabulary. (2) He has been obliged to formulate pretty distinctly a regular system of classified facts, — the facts which form the material of the grammar, — classified in due form under chapter, section, subsection, and so on. This means that he has learned to remember things by their relations — a power which can hardly be acquired without practice in forming or using such classified systems. You will see with a little reflection that under the old plan of the college course, this was the only, or at least the first and most important, classification of the kind that the student had to make. (3) He has had his judgment broadened and strengthened by constant calls upon it to account for things which cannot be accounted for without its exercise. He has learned the very important lesson that two things which look just exactly alike may be quite different if they stand in different relations to other things; and that men who think in different ways from himself, have also ways of expressing their thoughts which differ from his own ways. I do not need to dwell upon this point, for volumes have been written upon it, and it must be very familiar to you all. (4) His long practice in translation has given him a readiness and certainty in the use of his own language which he could hardly have acquired in any other way. (5) He may have learned, though he probably has not, to read Latin, and still less probably, Greek, well enough to use them in further literary or scientific studies, if he should have occasion.

Then we may add that the contact with "the best that has been thought and said in the world," which he can hardly

have escaped as an incidental to his language study, has done much to broaden his mind and make a more complete man of him.

I wish to take up these topics in order, and inquire what the modern languages have to offer in place of the classics in each case.

With regard to the first point, there is probably about as much exercise for the verbal memory in one case as the other. The modern languages have fewer paradigms, but offset this by a larger number of words in the general vocabulary.

Secondly, it is evident that to a modern mind there is less machinery, so to speak, belonging to a modern than to an ancient language. It is possible to learn a modern language well enough for practical purposes without knowing anything about the classification of conditional sentences, or the uses of the subjunctive, or the objective and subjective genitive. Moreover, those who study modern languages for practical purposes are sure to have had plenty of experience in making systematic classifications in connection with scientific studies. From this fact, taken in connection with the other fact that most of our students do after all get a good grounding in technical grammar through the classics before they come to modern languages, we find the tendency growing to teach modern languages with the minimum of technical grammar and the maximum of practice. This course is, I think, justified by the circumstances ; yet I would never forget that the conscious analysis of processes of thought involved in grammar study is a very valuable means of discipline, for which no other one thing is a substitute, and I would have all students, if they have time for it, — as most of them have, — get a good view, at some time of their course, of classified grammar as such. If they take the classics, well and good ; then it comes of itself, and the modern languages should be taken by such students with as little grammar as possible. If they are scientific students, the reducing of the facts of grammar

to a scientific classification will not be a difficult task for them. I think we shall find that, required a certain grade of maturity of mind, together with a certain proficiency in a given number of practical subjects, the end can be attained in about the same time, with the same amount of work, by several different methods of combining studies.

Under the third head also we find the modern languages inferior to the ancient in that they do not so inevitably force upon the pupil from the outset the discipline sought. The difficulties to be overcome, and the discipline obtained from overcoming them, are the same in kind in the modern languages as in the ancient, but much less in degree. In both cases they arise from the difference in the manner of living and thinking between the people whose language we are studying and ourselves. In the case of the classical languages, these differences are so great that the greater part of the student's effort is absorbed in the attempt, with all the aids of grammar, notes, and lexicon, to get any clear solution of them at all; and it is safe to say that a great majority of our students never get beyond these aids. In the modern languages boys often pass this point before the end of their second year's study of the language. I think, however, that if the proper pace is kept up with the work, the student meets quite as many opportunities for the exercise of the judgment in a year's work in modern languages as in the classics, though he must cover many times the number of pages in order to find them. The difficulties of this kind lie higher up, so to speak, in the modern languages than in the ancient. They are not so often connected with single words, but oftener with whole sentences, idioms, or groups of words; they are not so tangible and unavoidable at the outset. This, as well as the considerations discussed under the preceding head, is, to my mind, a strong argument in favor of having the classics precede the modern languages, where there is time for both.

I now come to translation, which, after all has been said and done, is and must be the central point of all language instruction, except that which falls to the so-called "natural method" in its proper sphere, where it is extremely valuable — I mean, of course, the nursery. I am not going into arguments on this point. I know that the ideal of attainment in a foreign language is to be able to read it like one's own, without translation; I know, too, that much can be done, under favorable circumstances, in teaching the use of a language as an art, by using it without translation from the outset; but I think you will generally agree with me that such favorable conditions are seldom or never realized in our school and college work, that the ideal mentioned can be better attained, at least by students who begin the study of a language at an age beyond childhood, through translation, and, what is still more important, the other method causes the student to lose the greatest disciplinary advantage in studying the language at all; namely, the improvement in the command of his own language which translation gives him. After a great deal of experience in teaching both ancient and modern languages, I have come to the conclusion that the modern have certain advantages as a medium for drill in translation which go far towards making up for their inferiority as a means of discipline in some other respects. A Latin or Greek word generally means something quite foreign to the mind of the American boy, and until he knows the thing he can form no adequate conception of the word's meaning. A French or German word, on the contrary, stands much oftener for something which he knows perfectly well, and he can be held to much stricter account in his rendering than is possible in the classics. For instance, take the Latin word *tunica*, or the Greek χιτών. He may have been told, or have found in his classical dictionary, if he has one, just what kind of a garment this was; but the chances are ten to one that he has not, and that he always renders it *tunic*, without much notion of

its cut, and that the teacher always accepts that rendering. But take the French word *chemise*, or the German *Rock ;* he knows what these stand for and renders them by the correct English word ; and if he finds that the context shows that one of them refers to a garment worn by a woman, he knows that he must vary his translation accordingly. The same thing is true with more abstract words and idioms ; and this makes it possible to begin with a class on a standard of clearness and accuracy of conception and rendering which is unattainable with Latin and Greek till after long study, and practically is seldom reached in our schools at all.

A second advantage of the modern languages is that they allow more time relatively to be given to translation at sight in the class-room ; and as the words stand for things more familiar, and the meaning of a strange word is more often evident from the context, they allow more thoughtful and intelligent work of this kind to be done. To say nothing of the fact that facility in reading a language at sight is the most directly useful thing obtained by its study, the discipline gained by this kind of practice is wonderfully sharpening to the judgment, and the kind of questions which arise come nearer to those of practical life than any others within my knowledge in the whole round of academic studies. The pupil is constantly called upon to form an opinion of the meaning of a word which he would not know if it stood alone, but which he has help to understand, varying in degree from a mere clew to absolute certainty, from the context or from a related word which he knows. This work is not blind guessing ; it is legitimate reasoning from the known to the unknown, and can be watched and guided and cultivated as well as any other logical process. It is pre-eminently a *natural method ;* it is the process by which we learn all new words in our own language which stand for conceptions beyond actual material things. This power of reasoning out the meaning of words from the context can be cultivated to an extent

hardly credible to one who never tried it. I always work for it with my pupils consciously, letting them know the object in view. I often say that I regard it as a greater fault to look in the dictionary for a word whose meaning is evident from the context, than to look up one not so evident and then forget it.

Suppose, now, that the pupil has a clear understanding of the French sentence; his work is only half done; he has then to make English of it. Here the difficulty is that the pupil will render words without much regard to their sense when taken in connection with the whole. This the teacher should refuse absolutely to allow. The aim should be first to get a clear conception of what the author means, and then, bearing in mind that nothing has often been said in French or German which cannot be said equally well in English, insist on having an English rendering which expresses the idea correctly, and does no violence to the English idiom. Of course this presupposes that the teacher's command of the English idiom is better than his pupil's, a condition unfortunately far too seldom fulfilled in our schools. Of course, other things being equal, a man who cannot think ahead of his pupils in their own medium of thought is not so fit to lead them in it as one who can.

This thought leads closely to my next head, the matter of *pace*. I think no one will deny that the amount of work done in modern languages, in proportion to the time spent, in the average of our schools, is unsatisfactory. This comes in very many cases from the fact that the pace is set by a man who, from his imperfect command of English, cannot take a class over the ground fast enough when English is the class-room medium; and if he tries to shield his incompetency behind the "natural method," makes a still worse failure in this respect. In other cases the modern languages are taught as a side subject by some worthy professor of Latin or Christian Evidences, who is accustomed to the deliberateness of the old

classic methods, and too often does not know enough of the language he is trying to teach to be master of the situation.

Now, if there is any one study in which this question of pace is important, it is in the modern languages. For, until the pupil has acquired a good practical reading knowledge, he can neither make a practical use of the language, nor gain the same amount of discipline as is to be obtained from classical studies; for, as I have already pointed out, the opportunities for discipline are less numerous, and lie at a more advanced stage in the practical knowledge of the language, in the modern than in the ancient languages. And this practical reading knowledge depends directly upon the amount of ground that can be intelligently got over by the pupil. Moreover, as things are, we all know that students are more likely to get into habits of dawdling in this than in any other subject. Of course there is work in which time must be sacrificed to accuracy, but I believe that the work in modern languages is not of this kind; that it is possible to combine the highest degree of accuracy with a much better pace than is now the rule, and that the contrary course is likely to disgust capable students, simply because it does not give them enough to do. The secret is to waste no time in repetition of what the pupil already knows; when a word or idiom is once learned no time should be wasted with it, but when it comes up it should be passed without comment, and all energies bent toward grappling with the new difficulties as they come. The man who has the real teacher's instinct, and is constantly feeling the minds of his pupils, can follow this process very closely, and give his pupils a sense of certainty regarding what they already know, which makes a very sure foundation on which to build higher. And a student who knows whether he knows a thing or not, is able to work at a much higher rate of speed than he who is not thus certain. It is this kind of self-assurance, and the rapid, clear-cut work which comes with it, which I find translation work in the modern languages so well adapted to give.

For the last point, I will only say briefly that the modern languages, as well as the ancient, open up to us the culture and intellectual life of other peoples, great in their way, as were the Greeks and Romans in theirs. If the differences from our own way of living and thinking are not so startling, their very nearness to us gives them a still greater interest, which increases with the increasing maturity of the student, and grows stronger the deeper it leads into the absorbing complexity of modern life.

And this brings me to my final thought, which is that the study of modern life and the language in which it is crystallized, is not milk for babes, but meat for strong men; and the work of instruction in this department is worthy of as high a place as any in the college curriculum; and I hope and trust that the time is speedily coming when the practical American mind will come to a realizing sense of this, and the problem will be taken up by practical American teachers and wrought out in a practical American fashion.

# THE TEACHING OF FRENCH AND GERMAN IN OUR PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS.[1]

BY MR. C. H. GRANDGENT, DIRECTOR OF MODERN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN THE BOSTON HIGH AND LATIN SCHOOLS.

By "our" schools I mean those of Massachusetts; and when I say "high schools," I am thinking especially of institutions that are not engaged in preparing pupils for college entrance examinations. Let us take it for granted, further, that a foreign language occupies, in the average high school course, some three hours a week for three years. It is obvious enough that we cannot do everything in this time: we are obliged to devote ourselves particularly to some one part of the subject, and our choice must be determined, in the first place, by our possibilities, and, next, by the purpose we have in mind. My intention is to examine briefly the five chief branches of modern language study, with a view to ascertaining which of them we can teach, and which of these latter we can most profitably pursue. I shall consider the five topics in the following order: speaking, writing, grammar, translation, reading.

First comes speaking. I am often asked: "Can we teach pupils to talk French and German?" Let us see. We know that the ability to use a language for the purpose of communicating ideas can be gained only through long-continued practice. The ear, the vocal organs, the memory, the reason-

[1] Read at meeting of Massachusetts Association of Classical and High School Teachers, December, 1891. Reprinted from *School and College*, with the permission of the publishers.

ing powers, the will, must all receive a special and thorough training. Hearing others speak will not do: we must speak ourselves. This is a case, if there ever was one, where the motto *fit fabricando faber* exactly hits the nail on the head. Now let us suppose that a class of twenty-five pupils, neglecting all else, spends its whole time in "conversation;" let us say that each recitation period consists of fifty minutes, and that the class recites three times a week; let us suppose, also, for the sake of the argument, that the instructor talks only half of the time. What is the result? If the hours are equitably divided, every pupil speaks for three minutes a week, or two hours yearly, or a quarter of a day during his entire public school career. When we reflect that it takes us, with fully an hour's exercise *per diem*, ten or fifteen years to master our native tongue, we can perhaps estimate the amount of skill that is to be produced by six-hours' practice scattered over a term of three years. It will then be unnecessary to discuss the question whether or not the ability to speak French or German is a desirable and proper object for a public school course. By all this I do not, in the least, intend to discourage the use of a foreign language in the class-room: my only purpose is to show that we cannot make speaking our chief aim, and that we must accept this fact once for all, and shape our methods accordingly. If, however, so-called "conversation" ought not to be regarded as an end in itself, it is certainly a most valuable auxiliary. There are at least four reasons why we should cultivate it: in the first place, it satisfies a frequently expressed desire on the part of the public, and as the public supports the schools, its wishes should be heeded; secondly, classes do not correctly appreciate what they read (especially if their text is either metrical in form or colloquial in style) unless they know how it sounds; thirdly, the actual use of the foreign tongue invariably interests the pupils, giving them a sense of mastery that nothing else can bring; and, lastly, exercises of this kind stimulate

the teacher to more extended study and greater mental activity. I should say, therefore, to those instructors who have a practical command of the language they teach, "Use it as much as possible in school, but do not waste time on it. If you have something to tell the class, say it in the foreign tongue whenever you think you will be understood without long explanation or tiresome repetitions. Encourage the scholars to express themselves in the same language as soon and as often as they can. Always, and particularly at the outset, insist on the best pronunciation attainable. Begin, as a rule, with simple and not too numerous French or German sentences containing no new words, and decrease, month by month, the proportion of English spoken. You will find that during the last year the greater part of your instruction can be imparted in the language you are studying." Teachers who cannot speak German or French I should earnestly advise to learn to do so as quickly as possible, but not to experiment on the class until they have acquired a fair degree of fluency and correctness.

We now come to our second subject, writing. It might naturally occur to us that if we devoted most of our energies to composition, we could, perhaps, give our scholars a kind of training admirably adapted to the development of their reasoning faculties, and, at the same time, fix in their minds the most important facts of the language. Of course, however, we do not wish to make writing our specialty unless we can teach pupils to write well; otherwise we shall have too little to show for our three-years' labor. Now, before students can learn to write properly, they must have collected the materials: they should have read a large amount of French or German, and they must have gained a clear and complete knowledge of the necessary points of grammar. The former of these requirements is often neglected by teachers, but it is, in my opinion, the more important of the two. All our talking and writing of foreign tongues, so far as it is correct, is almost

wholly a matter of imitation: we are never sure that any expression we may wish to use is right, unless we have seen or heard it before; and generally we must meet with a word or phrase many times, and examine it from several points of view, before we feel that we are on speaking terms with it. I think it would be no exaggeration to say that if we spent all our three years on translation and grammar, our best pupils would, at the end of that time, be just in proper condition to begin serious work in composition. Writing must, therefore, like speaking, be considered, in our high school course, as a side issue. It is, nevertheless, an indispensable auxiliary to grammar study, and, if intelligently conducted, a wonderful aid to reading and translation.

At first sight it would seem that grammar, our third topic, might well be made the principal theme of our modern language curriculum. If carefully pursued throughout the course, with enough reading and writing to illustrate its principles, it would furnish a good instrument for training the intelligence, and provide a subject that ought to be thoroughly learned, by diligent and fairly able scholars, in three years. "By diligent and fairly able scholars" — alas! this qualifying phrase opens our eyes to a weakness in the argument. For it is a fact, shown not by ratiocination, but by experience, that our pupils, when obliged to study grammar, are neither "diligent" nor "fairly able": they are, generally speaking, stupid and indolent beyond all endurance. Why? Simply because they dislike it. However pleasing grammar may appear to the philologist, who sees it in perspective, the schoolboy, for whom it is merely a collection of paradigms, formulas, and exceptions, finds it intolerably dry; and the schoolboy cannot do his best work unless he is interested. Here and there an instructor may exist sufficiently enthusiastic and discriminating to make the subject attractive; but I fear that most of our teachers are scarcely more fond of the science, for its own sake, than are the pupils themselves. Yet we must have

some grammar; else we can expect no accurate knowledge of the language. There seems to be but one way out of the dilemma: to teach only the essentials; to administer this necessary amount in small and well-graded doses, alternating with lessons of a different character; and to emphasize its utility and relieve its dulness by means of close association with interesting composition work and agreeable reading matter.

Translation and reading, as I use the terms, are not quite the same thing. The chief objects of the former are mental discipline and training in English; the main purpose of the latter is general culture, to be attained through the intelligent perusal of the greatest possible number of good foreign books. Yet the two cannot be entirely separated: reading must begin by translation; and it is equally true that the thoughtful translation of literary masterpieces cannot fail to refine the taste. In either case we must be sure to select works that are excellent in themselves, and can be readily appreciated by the scholars; we should study with the same care the differences of idiom between the two languages; and, whatever may be our aim, we ought never to be satisfied with inaccurate or awkward English versions. In these respects the two methods are identical. It is, in fact, rather two ideals that we have to distinguish. We may, on the one hand, direct all our labors toward the development of the reason; in this case we shall have a course consisting of carefully corrected translation, a maximum of grammar and composition, and comparatively little speaking. If, on the other hand, the end we have in view is the broadening of the mind and the cultivation of the taste, we shall have, perhaps, more translation and conversation and somewhat less writing and grammar; and we shall strive to train our pupils in such a manner that they can, before the end of the three years, absorb thought directly through the foreign medium, without the interposition of English. Both of these objects — mental discipline and general culture

— are so desirable that no complete course can wholly neglect either of them; and if lack of time compels us partially to sacrifice one to the other, we may not find the choice easy. The following considerations seem to me to be of weight. In our public schools most of the work appears to be calculated to fit young persons rather to meet the rude exigencies of life than to enjoy its good things: this is doubtless right; but the strictly practical side of education is not the only one that deserves attention. When foreigners criticise us Americans, they say we are intelligent, quick, inventive, but lacking in refinement and artistic taste; and I think there is much truth in their judgment. Now, refinement and taste are necessary factors of civilization: we cannot afford to pass by any opportunity to cultivate them; and how can they be more readily developed than by the study of literature? We already have a somewhat meagre course of reading in English; but this, even if it were far more extended, could never be half so effective in overthrowing prejudices, suggesting ideas, opening new vistas, and forming correct standards, as is the intercourse with great minds of other countries. I am, therefore, inclined to say that a French or German course does not fulfil its true mission until it affords pupils at least an introduction to the best literature of the language they are learning.

# THE AIM AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, AND METHODS OF TEACHING THEM.

BY PROFESSOR O. B. SUPER, DICKINSON COLLEGE.

In discussing this subject, I may say, in the first place, that I believe the object of all college studies to be the same, namely, *culture ;* and I do not think there is any great difference in the educational value of the different studies usually pursued in college. Some studies may be best for some minds, others for others. Most persons who have thought much on the subject will still agree that there is such a thing as a "liberal education," however widely they may differ as to what constitutes such an education. I do not think, myself, that a college should aim to be practical in its work, as the word practical is ordinarily understood. Business colleges, schools of technology, and universities, should be practical ; but the proper work of the college, in my opinion, is to impart general training, and thus more fully equip a man for entering a professional school, or for doing his part towards elevating the general intelligence of the community.

President Chadbourne once said: "Study, merely for discipline, is waste," and with this sentiment I fully agree. Mr. Lowell says: "It matters less what a man learns than how he learns it." Anything that is thoroughly learned disciplines the mind, no matter whether it be ancient or modern languages, mathematics, or physical science.

One occasionally hears, even now, the theory advanced that if a pupil dislikes any particular study, that is precisely the

study he needs, and that because Latin and Greek are harder than French and German, their disciplinary value is by so much the greater. To this it may be said, in the first place, that French and German are not easier than Latin and Greek, except in the earlier stages of the study. A pupil will, doubtless, read an average French book more rapidly after studying the language six weeks, than he would read a Latin book after six months; but then, we have no easy Latin. Cæsar, with which most pupils begin, is beyond the powers of the average boy or girl, both in style and matter, while "La Belle Nivernaise," or "Das Kalte Herz," are as easily understood as "Uncle Tom's Cabin," or "Little Lord Fauntleroy." But the fact that scarcely any one who begins the study of a modern language in school or college ever learns to speak it, or even write it, fluently and correctly, is sufficient evidence that those languages are not easy.

Again, what a student does with most pleasure, is likely to be most profitable to him. Hence the propriety of elective studies. Shakspere knew this three hundred years ago, for he says: —

> "No profit grows where is no pleasure taken.
> In brief, sir, study what you most affect."

Therefore, if I were asked how much French and German should be taught in college, I should say, "All that the pupil wishes to study, or all that he has time for, provided he carries on at the same time at least two other studies of a different character, such as philosophy, mathematics, or natural science."

The increasing value of the modern languages has been recognized in nearly all our schools and colleges by the increased facilities provided for the study of these languages, as compared with those of forty or fifty years ago. Only a generation or two ago, even our best colleges could not afford a professor of French or German. If the authorities thought

these languages worthy of any attention at all, their efforts to provide instruction in them were usually limited to hiring some "native" to come in and give lessons in his vernacular, just as fashionable boarding-schools at present hire a dancing-master or a teacher of the banjo. Mr. Lowell says that when he was in college nobody *studied* German, although there were some "boys who consented to spend an hour with the professor two or three times a week for the express purpose of evading study." Now all this has changed, and Harvard has at present more men engaged in teaching modern languages than there were in the whole college faculty thirty years ago; and the current will continue to set in this direction, for all that is valuable in the *literature* of the Greeks and Romans has been made more accessible in the living languages of the present day.

So far as the methods of teaching modern languages, or, in fact, any language, in college are concerned, I may say that the object is, or should be, to get the pupils into contact with the literature as soon as possible, and that method is best which tends most directly to this result. Of course I am now speaking only of collegiate instruction and of pupils who may be assumed to have fairly well-trained minds. What I shall say on this point applies mainly to the elementary stages of teaching, for that is the kind of work, in fact, the only kind of work, that most of us have to do. While many colleges require the rudiments of French or German for admission, no college, so far as I know, requires both of these languages; so that, where there are not at least two teachers for each of these languages, teachers of French and German will be required to teach beginners, and of the four hundred colleges in this country, only a few have more than one teacher for each of the modern languages, and most modern language teachers give instruction in both French and German, while some have even charge of other subjects in addition to these two.

Assuming, then, that the prime object of modern language study is the acquisition of the ability to read these languages, it may be said that, for this purpose, not much grammar is necessary. When possible, it might be desirable to separate those pupils who intend to make a specialty of modern languages from those who merely wish to take them as a desirable factor in making up the requisite number of electives in a college course. The former would do well to study the grammar thoroughly at the very start, whereas this would be a loss of time for the latter.

Too much attention, likewise, is often given to unimportant details. Time spent in learning lists of irregular verbs and rules for the gender of nouns is wasted. It may be useful to call attention to the fact that diminutives ending in *chen* and *lein* are neuter, and that derivatives in *heit*, *keit*, *schaft*, and *ung* are feminine, but beyond this, rules are not of much avail, for the gender of nouns cannot be learned by rule. This knowledge can only be acquired by long practice, and the subject is so full of intricacies, one might even say of absurdities, that, like the spelling of English, few persons ever completely master it. A satisfactory grammar that will serve as an introduction to the study of German remains to be written.

It may sound strange to hear it said that too much time may easily be spent in trying to teach pronunciation, but I do say this in spite of the fact that spoken language is the only real language. Those pupils who will ever learn to pronounce with a reasonable degree of correctness will learn to do it almost in the first lesson. This is particularly true of German. In French, more time must be devoted to phonetics, for the reason that its pronunciation differs more widely from the English than does the German, and also because there are in French so many anomalies and irregularities, that, so long as it is studied, it will be necessary for the teacher to call attention to these irregularities and exceptions. After an

experience of more than a dozen years, I am firmly convinced that there are in every college class some pupils who will never learn to pronounce French even respectably, and a few who will never even learn to pronounce German. There seem to be some persons whose ears are so defective that they are unable to distinguish slight differences of sound, or their vocal organs are so inflexible that they cannot imitate what they hear; consequently they will never learn to pronounce well. I am also constrained to add that pure inertia, to call it by no harsher name, stands in the way of the success of a certain contingent.

I recall an instance of a lady whose ability in most departments was above the average, but who could never be taught to pronounce the French article *les* otherwise than to rhyme with *pease*, and of a gentleman who always pronounced *haben* to rhyme with *geben*, and his pronunciation of most other words was equally faulty.

I have often recalled in this connection Schiller's "Wort:" "Mit der Dummheit kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens." I now give my pupils a fair chance to acquire a fairly good pronunciation; but if I find that they cannot or will not pronounce as I do, and I think the failure is often due to indifference, I give them over to "hardness of heart and reprobacy of mind," and I am not sure but that the rest of the text has some appropriateness here also.

Neither do I believe that much time should be spent on written translations into the foreign tongue, especially in the earlier stages of the work. This remark applies to nearly all languages except French. In German, composition can best be taught orally, and this method has the additional advantage of training the ear and the tongue at the same time. In French, oral translation is beset with some difficulties, owing to irregularities in spelling and pronunciation. The pupil may have the right form of a word in his mind, but his pronunciation may fail to make it perceptible to the teacher.

On the other hand, a sentence which appeared correct to the ear might prove to be very bad when written down. Besides, the proper use of accents can only be learned by a great deal of writing. It is, however, of no great importance to the average student whether he knows all about accents or not, since few ever desire to write French except when there is a dictionary at hand for consultation. The best thing to do with beginners in a language, after the simplest elements of grammar have been studied, I do not say *mastered*, is to put them to reading, and by reading I mean translation, although I know that some teachers disparage and even ridicule translation in language study. You doubtless remember the "winged word" of President Eliot, that there is only one thing essential to a liberal education, and that is the ability to use the mother tongue properly. Now, I believe that one of the most fruitful means of improvement in English is the practice of translating into it from another language.

I beg leave here again to quote Mr. Lowell, for what he says will, of course, have more weight than it would have if I said it myself: "In reading such books as chiefly deserve to be read in any foreign language, it is wise to translate consciously and in *words* as we read. There is no better aid in mastering our vernacular. It compels us to such a choosing and testing, to so nice a discrimination of sound, propriety, position, and shade of meaning, that we now first learn the secret of the words we have been using or misusing all our lives, and are gradually made aware that to set forth the plainest matter as it should be set forth, is not only a very difficult thing, calling for thought and practice, but an affair of conscience as well. Translation teaches us as nothing else can, not only that there is a *best* way, but that it is the *only* way. Those who have tried it know too well how easy it is to grasp the verbal meaning of a sentence or a verse. That is the bird in the hand. The real meaning, the soul of it, which makes it literature and not jargon, that is the bird in the

bush which tantalizes and stimulates with the vanishing glimpses we catch of it as it flits from one to another lurking-place."

In order that this exercise may have its fullest benefit, the reading should be easy, in order that a greater amount may be read, and the pupil thus have the greatest amount of practice; and there is then also this additional advantage, that a pupil is sure to take more kindly to his task if he can cover two pages in half an hour, than he will if he is required to spend the same time on half a page, and then perhaps not always be sure that he has caught the sense of the text.

It likewise seems to me that teachers are often too anxious to be reading the "classics" in French and German, and "Wilhelm Tell" and "Hermann und Dorothea" are frequently called on to perform duties that they are not at all fitted for. Not long ago I examined a candidate for advanced standing in German, and he told me that after studying some grammar the class read a few stories in the back of the book, after which they were put into "Maria Stuart," which they read entire. Now, with all deference to the opinions of teachers who do such things, I must say that I consider this proceeding to be radically wrong, and this for two reasons: (1) Both thought and style are too difficult to make such reading interesting to the average beginner, and (2) the pupil should first come in contact with the words and ideas of every-day life; such words as he can continually make use of if he has any opportunity or desire to do so; and tragedies are not the best place to look for these words. It is for this latter reason that I consider Hans Andersen better for beginners than Grimm, although the latter seems to be more generally used. Grimm's "Märchen," however, contain many words and phrases that are archaic or provincial, and the pupil should not be compelled to learn such in the earlier stages of study. One of the first words that a beginner in German will naturally learn is "*Pferd*," but it would be better for him not to learn at the

same time that by some Germans a horse is called "*Gaul.*" In fact, to most pupils the latter word is useless lumber.

The first sentence in one of our school editions of Grimm reads: "Einem reichen Manne, dem wurde seine Frau krank," a sentence whose construction would certainly look strange to a beginner. And that is not its greatest defect, for this is neither the best nor the most common way of expressing such an idea in German. If, after a pupil had read this sentence, the teacher should ask him, "Wer wurde krank?" he could scarcely find the proper form for an answer in the book; whereas, if the text read, "Eines reichen Mannes Frau wurde Krank," we should have a simpler sentence, and, at the same time, one which the pupil might be encouraged to imitate.

Translations should usually not be literal. Here, as well as in spiritual matters, it is generally true that the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. A literal translation may sometimes be called for in order to bring out the exact meaning of a word or phrase; but, generally speaking, it is the sense of the passage taken as a whole and not of the individual words that we should try to get at, and this sense should be expressed in the best possible English. On this account I must be permitted to say that no one who is not perfectly familiar with the English language is competent to teach French and German in our schools. In the advanced stages of study the case is, of course, different. If a pupil, then, correctly expresses the idea of the original, not much question or comment should be indulged in on the part of the teacher. Whether the pupil knows the precise reason for every subjunctive that he meets, is a matter of so little consequence that time need not be spent in catechising him on the subject.

Many of our elementary text-books suffer from excessive annotation. When the sense of any word or collection of words is such that the pupil is not likely to get a correct idea of it without a great deal of thumbing of grammar or lexicon,

then he should be helped, but long historical or philological disquisitions are usually out of place in books intended for ordinary class use. Pupils generally do not read such notes, or if they do read them as carefully as they must be read in order to be of any benefit, they waste time which would better be spent on the text itself. I recently saw a note of twelve lines of small type on the German word "*Roman*," showing its origin and how it differed from "*Novelle*," and on the same page a note of fifteen lines on the word "*voll*," showing how it was used in Middle High German, how Luther used it, etc., all of which was unnecessary in this place, for the pupil could not possibly have mistaken the meaning of the sentence, even if there had been no note.

Some teachers, indeed, object to all notes, because they are thereby deprived of an opportunity of displaying their own knowledge before their pupils, but there are few texts where notes can be entirely dispensed with. There should always be notes enough to enable the average pupil to prepare his lesson intelligently before coming into the class-room, but anything more than this is superfluous and is a positive detriment to the value of a book for ordinary purposes.

# THE NATURAL METHOD.[1]

BY PROFESSOR C. F. KROEH, STEVENS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY.

Although there have probably been teachers ever since the time of Pestalozzi, and perhaps before, who availed themselves of object-lessons to some extent in teaching languages, the merit of originating the so-called natural method is due to Gottlieb Heness in the same sense that the discovery of America is due to Columbus rather than to the Norsemen.

In 1865, while Heness was explaining to a friend the advantages of object-teaching, as used in Southern Germany, to help children in overcoming their dialects, the thought occurred to him that this means might be made of service in teaching German, or any other language. About six months afterward he promised to teach the sons of several professors in Yale University to speak German fluently in one school year of forty weeks, five days per week and four hours per day. In this undertaking he was so successful, that he opened a school, taught his method to Dr. L. Sauveur, and engaged him to assist in French. The method has since become widely known, especially through Dr. Sauveur's publications and summer schools.

The method consists in speaking only the foreign language in the class-room, as though English were not in existence. The teacher begins with short sentences about some object in sight, in such a way that the pupils cannot fail to understand him. He holds out a book, for example, and says,

[1] Reprinted, with the permission of the author, from his address before the Modern Language Association of America, 1886, on Methods of Teaching Modern Languages.

"Here is a book;" a pencil, and says, "Here is a pencil." Then, perhaps, he puts the pencil in the book and says: "The pencil is in the book." Thus he continues by going through ordinary motions of every-day life, suiting the action to the word. By judicious questioning the pupils are led to reproduce the phraseology they have heard. It is like living in a foreign country under favorable conditions.

Taking care to introduce but one new word or phrase at a time, the teacher continually combines in new ways the words already acquired by the pupils, and soon reaches a point at which it is rarely necessary for him to have recourse to pantomime or even to visible objects.

His next step is to lead up to some easy reading by preparing his pupils beforehand for the new things and the difficulties to be encountered. His object in doing so is to enable them to read the piece as a native does, without the necessity of translating. When they have read the piece, he drills them conversationally on the phraseology until he has reason to believe that they have transferred it to their working vocabulary. Perhaps he finishes by making them learn the piece by heart.

Grammar is taught in instalments as soon as it can be understood when explained in the new language; in my own practice, about the tenth or fifteenth lesson. Translation is postponed as long as possible.

When the vocabulary of the learner is sufficiently extensive, he is required to relate anecdotes, to condense stories he has read, to convert poetry into prose, etc. At this stage it is claimed he will enjoy all the beauties of literature exactly as a native does. There is now no further objection to his translating from one language into the other for the purpose of improving his style in both, and of acquiring that nicety of discrimination which we admire in scholarly writers.

Let us now examine the objections which have been made to this system.

It cannot be denied, we are told, that the most natural process for learning a language is that through which little children pass. They listen to their mothers and companions, watch their facial expressions, their gestures and actions, and then imitate both the action and the accompanying words. But in this way about ten or twelve years are consumed in acquiring a commonplace, colloquial vocabulary. To this the child adds constantly, with its increasing experience derived from intercourse, reading, and study. The acquisition of knowledge goes hand in hand with the acquisition of terms to express it, and the process never stops.

Now, when a young man enters college at the average age of eighteen, it is manifestly too late to repeat this lengthy and wasteful process with any other language. Besides, the conditions will never again be the same as those under which he learnt his mother tongue. His own mental organism has changed. He has lost much of the spontaneous receptivity and plasticity of mind peculiar to childhood, and has developed in exchange the faculties of comparison, reasoning, and generalization.

He is now, moreover, already in possession of the means for expressing his thoughts. The words of his vernacular have become thoroughly connected with the ideas they represent, and have linked themselves to form a vast number of inseparable chains of phraseology. A new language must displace all this. His mind now runs in deeply worn grooves. Consequently the new language has not the same chance of success as the first. It has a habit to overcome. The older the student, the more firmly established the habit and the more extensive the vocabulary to be displaced. An adult will not be content with the commonplaces of children. Hence he must work all the harder to attain fluency.

Reasoning similar to that which has just been given has led some writers, who are imperfectly acquainted with the capabilities of the natural method, to decide that it might be

suitable for children, but not for adults. As in so many controversies, the difficulty here is in a name. The natural method is not the process by which children learn from their mothers. It is, or ought to be, a great deal better than that, though based upon it. It is natural in its basis, but highly artificial in its development; and hence the name by which it has become known is, to a certain extent, a misnomer. But we cannot change that now. We can only point out that the arguments just formulated do not apply to the natural method as it is, but only as it is supposed to be.

It has been objected that the teacher is required to do a disproportionate share of the work; that he must labor excessively to supply the place of dictionary, grammar, and foreign surroundings to his pupils; and that his memory must be under a continual strain to retain the exact vocabulary of all his different classes at every stage of their progress. A skilful teacher will, however, find means of lightening his labor and overcoming these difficulties.

Another objection that has been made is that the conversation necessarily turns upon trivial subjects, but my own experience has convinced me that this is true only at the outset; and since many, even of my adult pupils, find great difficulty in these very commonplaces, I must conclude that they are a necessary evil. Fortunately it is only a brief one.

It must not be supposed that the teacher is required by the natural method to lower himself in any way in order to amuse his listeners by converting his illustrations into a farce. He must possess a thorough command of his language; he must combine and recombine the vocabulary of his class skilfully and ingeniously, so as always to be understood; and he must have at his beck and call a wealth of illustrations, such as proverbs, winged words, anecdotes and poetry, that will not permit the attention of his hearers to flag for an instant. He wields over them the power of an orator, and he may use it for their highest mental and moral good.

Again, it has been objected that this method fails to bring into play the higher faculties of the mind, and that it is folly to reject any philosophical aids to the study of languages, such as grammar and bilingual dictionaries.

The first portion of this objection will never be made by any one who has successfully used the method, even to a very limited extent. Such a teacher knows that his pupils are vigorously comparing and reasoning all the time, and he leads them to make their own generalizations as soon as they can do it in the language taught.

I cannot conceive of any philosophical aid to the study of languages that the "Sprechlehrer" cannot avail himself of. He certainly can and does teach grammar as thoroughly as it can be done by the old way.

It would be inconsistent to permit beginners to use a bilingual dictionary, for several reasons. It promotes mental inertia, because it is easier to look up a word than to reason out its meaning from the context; it is misleading, because it makes the learner believe that words exactly coincide in two languages; whereas they may only touch each other at one or two points, and then each may have its own distinct figurative ramifications, which are all natural enough, provided we do not mix them; and lastly, the very existence of English must be ignored during these lessons, for reasons which will presently appear.

Yet, notwithstanding all these reasons, it would sometimes seem as though we had rejected a valuable aid by dispensing with a bilingual dictionary, especially when we consider that beginners have no other means of pursuing their studies out of the class-room. They cannot, of course, use a unilingual one until they have made considerable progress. But perhaps they had better not pursue their studies out of the class-room at that stage. There is room for a difference of opinion on this point.

The advantage of the natural method over that which is

based upon reading is obvious. It is hardly possible to hear a recitation of more than six moderate octavo pages in one hour, if nothing else is done than "hear the lesson." If there are explanations and comments, the lessons must be shorter. Now, it is not difficult to calculate that the conversation heard by the students in one lively lesson by this method would fill at least forty pages, as a fluent speaker uses about two hundred and fifty words per minute, and a medium-sized octavo page contains about three hundred words.

The basis of all language, whether literary or scientific, is the phraseology of every-day life, and this can be learned only by imitation. In actual conversation there is no time to reason about the arrangement, agreement, and government of words, or to translate them from one language into another. We must think directly in the language we are speaking. Now, I am not acquainted with any other system than the natural method that has provided the means of doing so. Its great merit, in my opinion, consists in the fact that it leads the learner *to associate the new vocabulary directly with objects and actions instead of with their English names.*

The natural tendency of the learner is to translate the foreign phrases he hears and sees; but by this method he is soon convinced that he is wasting his time and only practising English by so doing; because he can raise his hand, for example, and say, "I raise my hand" in any language, without the necessity of first thinking it in English.[1] By means of these preliminary object-lessons the habit of direct association is soon formed, and this I consider their chief value.

[1] Since writing the above, the writer became aware of the fact that he had credited the natural method with a feature that was original with him. The remark, that "he can raise his hand, for example, and say, 'I raise my hand' in any language, without the necessity of first thinking it in English," contains a new departure not contemplated by the natural method, in which the teacher and not the pupil, as a rule, performs the action. The performance of the action by the learner when he says the corresponding words, and the systematic, direct association of the two, to the exclusion of English, form the basis of the writer's "Living Method for Learning how to Think in Foreign Languages."

Moreover, the student, on seeing before his eyes actions and objects, and hearing them described, must receive more vivid impressions, and is therefore more likely to remember than where mere words are associated together, as in translation.

After a foreign language has been studied for a while as a living tongue, that is to say, after a limited number of words and phrases, learned as described, have become grouped and linked together in a great variety of ways, and thoroughly incorporated with our brain fibre, reading will increase our command of the new language, just as it does in English, and for the same physiological reason. Nothing is then so absolutely novel and strange as not to find something kindred in the brain to which it can attach itself according to the laws which govern the action of the memory.

The proper time for systematically comparing two languages is when the student possesses a moderately good knowledge of both. I do not mean that all comparison should be postponed until then; only that such comparison should not be made the basis of instruction. The student will unavoidably institute some for himself; but he will never know a language as a native does unless he has learned to utilize its power of explaining itself.

From these considerations I conclude that the natural method furnishes the most philosophical introduction to the study of languages which has ever been proposed for the classroom. For study without a teacher, where reading is the sole object, the interlinear system is recommended for languages differing widely in construction from our own, and the Marcel system for those which do not.

The natural method is, of course, interminable. Probably no teacher can pursue it to the point at which his pupils are able to express themselves in the new tongue as perfectly on all subjects within their range as they can in the vernacular. In my own course I can go no farther than to lay the foundation which has been so well formulated by Prendergast. Then

we must read as much as possible and push forward to the ultimate object of our course, — the easy comprehension of scientific and technological literature.

The greatest difficulty I have to encounter is the imperfect training, or total absence of training, of the ear in our schools. The education of our young people is conducted almost exclusively through the eye by means of books. There is so little oral instruction that the pupils not only do not hear accurately, but have to learn the art of paying attention. To meet this difficulty, I have prepared drill-books on the pronunciation of German and French, in which the difficulties are overcome one by one by systematic practice. By placing these books in the hands of students, I find when I begin conversation that my labor is very much lightened.

### SELF-INSTRUCTION AND THE CLASS-ROOM.

Permit me in conclusion to describe how I should avail myself of various aids in acquiring a language myself. I should undoubtedly begin by taking a course of lessons by the natural method until I was sure that my pronunciation was accurate and until I had mastered all the constructions. Then I should read a short grammar, written in the language I was studying, and thoroughly drill myself on declensions and conjugations, especially the irregular ones, rejecting, of course, all that are likely to occur but rarely.

The next step would be to read several thousand pages without consulting a dictionary, or at least without consulting it very often. This first reading must not be too difficult. It should consist of popular tales and even nursery rhymes and songs, — everything in fact that a native learns first in his own language.

All the literature of a nation is full of allusions to these outgrowths of popular life, and many of them have enough intrinsic value to repay the trouble of storing them in the memory.

Then I should ascertain what are the best contemporary novels and plays, and read all the works of one good author first, because a man necessarily has a limited vocabulary and is obliged to repeat himself. I should select a writer of the realistic school whose realism confined itself to minute descriptions of the ordinary events of life; for my object would now be to surround myself artificially with the advantages which can be derived otherwise only from a residence among the people whose language I desire to master.

In all this reading, my constant endeavor is to avoid translating.

Whenever I reach a good colloquial sentence likely to be of service to me, because it contains either phraseology that must be used in daily intercourse, or connectives, constructions, or idioms peculiar to the language, I impress it upon my memory, by repeating it once or twice without looking at the book and as though I were actually speaking to some one. Then I mark the sentence; and on finishing the volume, I renew my acquaintance with the marked passages by copying them in a note-book.

It is astonishing how naturally the material thus stored in the mind becomes available for the purposes of actual conversation. Not the identical sentences, but their peculiar turns, come up as occasion arises to apply them.

If no such occasion arises, we must create one artificially, or else all our labor is in vain. We must think in the new language daily; that is, we must hold mental conversations with ourselves about familiar objects, scenes, and persons, and about our occupations: we must recall anecdotes and stories we have read; in short, we must entertain ourselves as best we can in the foreign language during our walks, rides, and moments of leisure and solitude.

While we can do all this for ourselves, it is not so easy to carry out the principle of it in the class-room. We may convince students of the desirability of such a method of self-

instruction, and hold out to them the certainty of success; but few, if any, will put it in practice unless we make it impossible for them to avoid following our instructions. It is the nature of the youthful mind to study all lessons in precisely the same manner — a lesson in languages just like a lesson in geometry. To them studying means reading a task over and understanding it. The idea of *practising* has to be enforced.

It will be desirable, therefore, on hearing a reading-lesson to direct students to mark and commit to memory certain sentences in such a way that they can repeat them the next day fluently and naturally after reading them over once. Any hesitation or false emphasis should be considered a failure. Then questions might be prepared to compel students to combine their newly acquired vocabulary in various ways.

By judicious selection they will soon accumulate enough material to enable them to narrate in their own phraseology simple stories and anecdotes, and eventually to condense longer narratives, to paraphrase poetry, and to write compositions.

I consider it very important to begin with the literature of the present day, and not to meddle with classical writers until the daily newspaper no longer presents any difficulties. Then the student may approach the classics on a footing of equality with a native. Those who imagine that they are enjoying a foreign classic while they have to dig out the meaning laboriously, are only deluding themselves. What they enjoy, if they honestly get any pleasure in the process, is the thought of the writer as conveyed in their own rendering, and perhaps also the satisfaction of overcoming difficulty. They certainly cannot enjoy the beauty of the original.

# THE "READER" THE CENTRE OF MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING.[1]

BY W. STUART MACGOWAN, ASSISTANT MASTER, CHELTENHAM COLLEGE, ENGLAND.

THE main principle which I shall have to establish in dealing with this question is the following, which I shall now postulate as an axiom, but shall shortly endeavor to prove; viz., *The reading of connected texts is the basis upon which a sound practical knowledge of a modern language can best be acquired.*

If not, what is our alternative? That great authority on things educational, Dr. Johnson, has furnished us with a doctrine which, from its apparent logic, has overshadowed all teaching of languages from his day to our own. He says, "First get a thorough knowledge of the grammar, and then apply what you have learnt to reading and writing." This seems beautifully simple, but a long and patient trial has proved it to be a fallacy most cunningly concealed. Teachers are now awakening to the fact that, by giving to grammar a premier and isolated position, they have for years persistently put the cart before the horse. The result of this has been sorrow and disgust to the teacher, weariness and pain to the pupil. This is hardly surprising. Grammar in the abstract does not appeal to the mind of the pupil; it is uninteresting, unintelligible, and is not remembered for long. It makes the study of language dry even to pupils with strong linguistic tendencies, and leads them to attach an exaggerated

[1] Read at the Modern Language Conference of the Teachers' Guild, 1890, and reprinted with the permission of the author.

importance to really very unimportant details. Grammar was made for man, and not man for grammar. I am not abusing grammar, in so far as it helps us to understand language; but our stereotyped method of imparting it has brought it into just disrepute. Surely it is possible to write and speak French without knowing all about the plurals of compound nouns. Thus *grand'mères*, but *grands pères; avant-gardes*, but *timbres-poste*, etc.

Is it necessary that an elementary student of German should burden his memory with the differences in meaning of *Länder* and *Lande*, *Tücher* and *Tuche?* Is it absolutely essential that a Latin student should be quite certain of the gender of a *bat*, a *cough*, and a *basin* in that language?

This kind of thing is very nearly useless, even in more advanced prose composition.

Grammar, then, being an abstract and lifeless science, we must put it in a concrete form, if we are to give it any vitality. This is brought about by bringing it into connection with reading. If a boy has seen a form in his reading-book, and has had to translate it, it is no longer an abstract creation of the grammarian, a something shadowy and unreal, which has no part in life, but it has become an objective reality to him, a concrete and tangible object, which will serve him as a basis for an intelligent grammar lesson.

Let us take a form like δρῶσα in Greek. The pupil has to find a meaning, fails, and has to be told that it is contracted from δρά-ουσα; he will then see the need of some rules for contraction, and will eagerly welcome any assistance which grammar can give. In other words, we ought never to give a grammatical rule without a preceding concrete instance. This is really the only logical method, and yet how few Latin or Greek grammars do we see giving numerous examples of a phenomenon, and then deducing their rules from these examples. Don't they nearly all give the rule first, and then illustrate the rule by examples? I remember vividly how, at

school, I wasted valuable time by mechanically committing to memory first the rules of the Latin Grammar, and afterwards those of the Latin Primer.

Again, there are some things in a language which no grammar can ever explain, no rule can ever define. Rules and grammar are powerless to cope with what can only be felt: it is useless to explain the vigor of a foreign idiom; we can but feel it or imitate it. It is quite impossible to explain how a thought took a certain form of words; in our rendering we can at best give an approximate translation, or a corresponding idiom. Grammar, then, has very clearly defined boundary lines, which it is powerless to pass.

Therefore, grammar, to be really useful, must be brought into connection with the reading of carefully selected texts. In this form it will be of real service to the pupil.

The case for the Reader as Centre of Instruction may be very adequately summed up in the words of Bréal: "*Il faut apprendre la grammaire par la langue et non la langue par la grammaire.*" — "*Grammar should never be taught before the language and apart from it.*" (Kühn, Preface to French Grammar.)

But I fully recognize the importance of a systematic treatment of grammar in the reading-book, and do not therefore agree with those who would abandon grammar altogether. Grammar is the systematized result of man's labors in the field of language; to throw it away would be a wilful sacrifice of the experience of our race, and would compel each pupil to begin systematizing for himself afresh. This would be a terrible state of affairs, and might aptly be termed the method of "plunge and struggle." It has very little to recommend it, and is open to some serious objections.

(*a*) The task of forming a logical series of inductions, in the strict sense of the word, is beyond the power of most pupils. They would be simply bewildered by the maze of forms they would encounter, and without assistance they

could never reduce their experiences to anything like order. It has been said by some advocates of this method: One word is as difficult to a beginner as another; but, even if we admit this obvious fallacy for the sake of argument, it by no means follows that the *order* in which we present words, and facts connected with them, is of no importance. We must help our pupil to introduce order in all his conceptions; all his work must be systematic; he must see as clearly as we do the goal towards which he is striving: boys resent being taught in the dark. *What we want is modified induction,* — i.e., *induction on the basis of certain carefully prepared texts.*

(*b*) But there is another, and I think a graver, objection to the method of "plunge and struggle" than that just mentioned. If we abolished grammar, we should abolish with it that mental discipline which some rate so highly, and which consists in mastering and applying a systematic knowledge of any language. This is a real education to a pupil, and in these days, when the tendency is to assign the dominant place to purely utilitarian subjects, we cannot afford to let him neglect it. It gives him a power of abstract thinking, and may be obtained just as easily from a *modern* as from an *ancient* language.

We may definitely assume, therefore, that grammar is a necessity; it remains to be seen in what form it can best be taught.

Most of our present methods, although they all, from Ollendorff to Prendergast, have some definite underlying principle, are open to the objection that they are unsystematic and inexact, and are thus not calculated to impress the pupil with the idea that languages are really a most scientific study. It would serve no purpose to enumerate the many deficiencies in the more prominent among modern methods of imparting foreign languages; but the main points which have struck me most forcibly in the numerous grammars I have read are the following: —

(i.) Their utter want of organization.

(ii.) The absolute lack of anything like a definite system in dealing with the varied phenomena of language.

The most glaring defect of all, viz., the absolute want of uniformity in grammatical terms, has already been dealt with, so that I need only mention it in passing.

The unfortunate pupils are lost in a wilderness of confused ideas; every grammarian, every author of a "course," uses different terms to still more bewilder the hopelessly befogged pupil. Every one has his own particular fad, his one pet belief, which he produces regardless of the fact that, while teachers disagree, pupils must suffer. "Quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi."

There are some people, however, who derive great hope for the future from the very multiplicity of our rival systems, on the general ground that "Competition is healthy," or "There is nothing like free trade in education." Nevertheless, our striking lack of uniformity has been, and still is, largely responsible for the low level of knowledge of foreign languages noticeable among us to-day.

Do not let us disperse without formulating the main principles on which the true method of teaching foreign languages can be based.

This brings us to the further question, *What are the conditions which an ideal method ought to fulfil?*

They are numerous, but they may be summed up shortly.

(1) *The Reader must be systematic;* i.e., it must lend itself to a methodical study of grammar. This may be best achieved by means of carefully prepared texts into which the forms to be learnt are systematically introduced in a prescribed order. This must, of course, be accomplished without doing violence to the literature; and, by diligent search, pieces may be discovered which amply illustrate all the grammatical phenomena of a language. By this method the pupil will kill two birds with one stone, — (*a*) he is developing his sense

of language by learning phraseology and vocabulary, and (*b*) he is learning grammar — *inductively*, almost unconsciously. Then, too, his interest must be kept alive no less by the consecutiveness of the passages than of the ideas they embody. There must be no isolated nonsense sentences, so dear to the disciples of Messrs. Otto, Ollendorff, and Ahn, about "My brother's cups of tea," or " The trees of the good baker's wife." Fragments of this sort may possibly be understood, but they cannot form a compact whole in the mind of the pupil, for the very good reason that they have never been conceived as a whole in the mind of the grammarian.

Thus, a definite and systematic series of graduated grammatical phenomena is an indispensable requisite of any Reader which is to be the centre of instruction.

(2) Another important feature of this Reader would consist in the *arrangement of the various grammatical phenomena to be acquired.* These would be so arranged as to present to the pupil the important before the unimportant, the less difficult before the more difficult.

The results of this method would be that the pupil, instead of leaving school with an ill-assorted medley of isolated facts, which are of very little use for the practical purposes of reading and writing, would have acquired without difficulty a complete and connected view of the main features of the language. This he would carry away with him in his memory, and it would be a permanent possession to him.

(3) The next point of importance in the Reader would be the position the vocabulary (*Wortschatz*) would occupy. This should be useful, but not too comprehensive; simple, and yet not vague. It should not attempt to replace the teacher entirely, but should yet be sufficiently extensive to give the pupil a sufficient *copia verborum.* In this particular it would fittingly replace the dictionary, the clumsy use of which causes an immense waste of time among junior pupils.

(4) Another important feature in this Reader would be

*graduated English passages for translation based upon the grammar and vocabulary just acquired in the foreign text.* Writing must always be based upon reading. The importance of this principle was recognized by Roger Ascham, and its truth is nowadays reasserted by many prominent modern schoolmasters. In many of the French and German schoolbooks of the present day, one constantly finds after the text, sentences, and sometimes connected passages for retranslation. But, though both Ascham and modern teachers are at one as to the importance of basing writing upon reading, yet here again there is no system, though Bacon's dictum, that "writing maketh an exact man," is as universally recognized to-day as it was three hundred years ago. What is wanted now is a Reader which shall combine Ascham's principles with the research and ingenuity of modern times; i.e., writing based upon reading combined with systematic grammar. Such writing as this would be doubly useful, because it would compel a pupil to arrange and apply his knowledge.

Lastly, it would be an essential feature of the reading-book that it should be in touch with our examination system, although it is to be hoped that examiners may shortly see fit to modify somewhat their present *modus operandi*. Still, any method, to be an ideal one in a *practical* as well as an *educational* sense, must not be too far removed from the exigencies of our time.

With such a Reader as this, the true order of learning would be somewhat as follows: —

(i.) Read a carefully prepared text under the direction of a teacher.

(ii.) Learn a small piece of grammar arising out of the text just read.

(iii.) Apply the knowledge thus gained to writing.

Efforts have been made of late to embody in practical form the principles for which I contend, and I hope that before long the problem will be successfully solved to which Mr.

Henry Sweet refers in an article in the *Academy* of July 17th, 1886, when he speaks of the imperative "necessity of bridging over the formidable gulf between grammar and reading."

But the importance of this subject is not merely technical, or solely educational; it is vital to the best interests of a wider circle than that controlled by the scholastic profession. The public have a right to expect that their sons and daughters shall be practically instructed at school how to read, write, speak, and understand foreign languages. It is not for want of ability in the rising generation that our knowledge of foreign languages is of such small practical use: there is no lack of native intelligence in the Anglo-Saxon race, — it is merely the want of a properly organized rational system. It is perfectly useless to expect good "results," if we leave to the unfettered free agency of untutored minds the task of selecting or evolving the method by which these results are to be obtained. The average mind is quite incapable of the initial effort which the evolution of a system demands; hence, in the interests of foreign languages, it is absolutely essential that the majority of teachers should be agreed as to the catholic method of imparting instruction.

It is thus little less than a national calamity that language teachers should regard the chaotic muddle of conflicting methods with complacency, when the country cries aloud for reform. We modern language teachers have a great national duty to fulfil, and one which will brook no delay. It is an urgent educational necessity that the true method of teaching foreign languages should be laid down in no ambiguous terms. In my opinion, Order, Uniformity, and Progress can best be attained by the adoption of the Reader as the centre of all foreign language teaching.

# ON THE USE OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE CLASS-ROOM.[1]

BY PROFESSOR H. C. G. VON JAGEMANN, HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

QUESTIONS connected with methods of teaching are largely economic questions. Pedagogical theory may devise what seems to be a thoroughly scientific method of teaching a foreign language; the teacher, however, is less concerned with what, on general principles, ought to be done, than he is with what he can do thoroughly well, with a given number of pupils, of a given capacity, in a given time. The ideal method of teaching is rarely practicable in the class-room, owing to the great limitations of teaching-force and time; and he who would be a successful teacher must recognize these limitations, must adapt his ideal method to the real conditions, and must refrain from trying to do the things which, from the nature of these conditions, cannot be done satisfactorily.

The various reforms in the teaching of modern languages that have been advocated time and again since Comenius, are only in part applicable to the conditions ordinarily found in schools and colleges. It seems, e.g., hardly necessary to point out that for grown persons the "Natural Method" of learning a language, i.e., the method by which children learn their mother tongue, would be as unnatural as it would be for children to learn their mother tongue from Webster's Dictionary; while, on the other hand, it is not at all certain that even little children might not learn their mother tongue more rapidly if they received

[1] A part of the material contained in this paper was printed in the Transactions of the Modern Language Association of America, vol. i. pp. 220 ff.

in it judicious and systematic instruction, adapted to their age, instead of being left to "pick it up," with a great waste of energy upon material of which they cannot yet make use. But even in the improved, and hence to that extent no longer "natural," form which this method has gradually taken in the hands of some very skilful teachers, its most distinctive features render it still unfit for use in ordinary college classes. These distinctive features are: (1) all instruction is in the first place oral; and (2) the only medium of communication permitted between teacher and pupil is the language to be taught.

To make instruction oral to the extent which the Natural Method requires is out of the question, because in college classes progress depends very largely upon the amount of home-study which the student can give to the subject, and home-study is made very difficult when the instruction in class is largely oral. To be sure, there are beginners' books in the foreign idiom, but one has as yet succeeded in writing a systematic text-book in a foreign language which a student can use without frequently resorting to a dictionary or vocabulary when the teacher is not at hand; and that way of finding out the meaning of a word is excluded by the strict advocates of the "Natural Method." How then is the student to be employed in the two hours of home-study for each recitation, the minimum ordinarily expected? As long as dictionaries and vocabularies are excluded, the Natural Method is possible only in schools where recitations are frequent, and where no work is expected of the pupil outside of the class-room, excepting, perhaps, memorizing matter with which he has been made thoroughly familiar in the class-room. Again, purely oral work itself is very difficult, if not impossible, with classes as large as are usually found in colleges. The various "Schools of Languages" that have produced good results with certain special varieties of the Natural Method, insist upon very small classes, and do not generally burden

the teacher with more than six pupils at a time. With classes as small as that, oral instruction might be made more successful in colleges and schools.

The second rule of the Natural Method, that the language to be taught should be the only medium of communication between teacher and pupil, deprives the student of one of the most useful instruments for learning a foreign language, viz., his mother tongue. Because a child, in trying to understand a new word or a strange idiom, does not draw for aid upon a foreign language which it does not understand at all, this is not a good reason why a grown person in full possession of one language should not make use of it for the purpose of correctly classifying the material of any other language that he may wish to acquire. It would seem distinctly unnatural if he did not make use of it. In fact, it would be quite impossible. His ultimate aim, to be sure, should be to understand and use the foreign language without the intervention of his own, i.e., without translating; but at first, and temporarily, voluntarily or involuntarily, he will associate the new word with the old, and not directly with the thing, until, by continued practice, he learns, so to speak, to skip one of the two mental processes, and learns to connect the new word directly with the thing, and *vice versâ*. The words of our mother tongue are so firmly associated in our minds with the things which they signify, that it requires a distinct and prolonged mental effort to displace them so much as to make room for a new word. That this is natural and in accordance with the laws of the human mind appears from the fact that even within the territory of our native language it is difficult for us to learn a new word without associating it at first with one with which we have previously been acquainted; and even in learning the name of a new thing, or of one for which we have not known any special name, we are very much inclined not to be satisfied with the new term, but we involuntarily seek at least for a definition made up of words of our old

stock. It is doubtless well to make, from the very beginning, systematic efforts to induce the student to connect the new words with the things themselves, and not with the words of his native language. But, on the other hand, there is no economy of time or strength in persistently rejecting the help which the student's native language offers, when we wish to make clear to him the meaning of a new word or idiom, especially as we cannot prevent the familiar native word from coming up in the pupil's mind, as soon as he has caught the drift of an often long and laborious, though perhaps successful, definition in the foreign idiom.

While, therefore, we do not believe that the language to be taught should form the only medium of communication between teacher and pupil, we are yet convinced that instruction in modern languages in colleges and schools is rendered more effective by making in the class-room as much use of the foreign idiom as the varying conditions of time, teaching-force, and general and special advancement of the pupils will allow. In order not to be misunderstood, however, we must state at once that we do not regard the ability to speak the foreign language as the chief object of its study in school or college. The difference between two persons, both knowing German thoroughly well, but one of them speaking the language, while the other does not, is simply this: the former has pronounced so often the most common words of the language in their various combinations with other words, that the mental process of associating certain ideas with the German words, and the subsequent reaction upon the speech-organs, has with him become habitual and rapid, while with the latter person it is unwonted and slow. Hence, the acquisition of a speaking knowledge of a foreign language does not, in itself, imply any increase in real knowledge or reasoning-power; and it has, therefore, no more claim to a place among serious college studies than any other of the numerous practical applications of scientific or artistic principles. The ground on which we

wish to justify the use of the foreign language in the class-room is not that it gives the student a speaking knowledge of it, but that it leads to a more thorough general acquaintance with the language, and a more intelligent appreciation of its literature.

As we have stated above, the extent to which the foreign idiom should be used in the class-room will depend on the varying conditions of time, teaching-force, and general and special advancement of the pupil. Any use of the foreign idiom as a means of communication between teacher and pupil requires intense mental application on both sides; for this reason, in elementary or second-year's classes, it can hardly be recommended, unless the classes are smaller than they are in most colleges. It is hoped that the time will come when teachers of German will not be burdened with larger elementary classes than their colleagues in Greek now are; then there will be no longer any objection to the use of German in the class-room on the ground of the size of the classes. Experience shows that in beginners' classes not exceeding twenty-five, the German language may to advantage be used from the very start, even in teaching the elements of grammar. The method which we recommend is, briefly, the following: —

Teach the student, by any method you may choose, the use of about fifty nouns, twenty-five adjectives, the numerals, a few particles, and a few forms of the auxiliaries. A week will amply suffice for this. The student will then be able to understand a simple grammatical principle if stated in German: —

*Die deutsche Sprache hat zwei Declinationen.*
*Die erste Declination hat drei Klassen.*
*Die erste Klasse hat in der Mehrzahl keine Endung, etc.*

These are sentences which the German student of a week or two will understand as readily as though they were written or spoken in English. The statement and explanation, in

German, of grammatical principles is much easier than is commonly supposed. It requires at first a little effort on the part of the teacher, to couch his explanations in such plain language as his students can understand. But this art may soon be acquired. A calculation shows that the elements of German can be taught according to any of the grammars commonly used, with the use of about eighty-five grammatical terms, mostly, of course, of Latin extraction. If the German language is to be used as a means of communication between teacher and pupil, sixty-four of these terms, or about seventy-five per cent, may be used in so slightly modified a form, that the student will easily understand them the first time they are used, and this without unduly resorting to Latinisms, using merely the same terminology that is used in Germany in all schools of a higher grade. In the case of twenty-three words, or twenty-seven per cent, is the corresponding German word of German origin preferable; in only a few cases, like "Ablaut" and "Umlaut," is it necessary to employ a purely German word. Some teachers will find it more advantageous to use as much as practicable a purely German terminology, and there is no doubt a certain gain in teaching such terms as "Hauptwort" and "Bindewort;" but even in that case the student will have to learn only forty-eight words which he does not know, in slightly modified form, from English or Latin Grammar, and most of them, like those cited above, are of very transparent signification. Aside from these technical terms, only the most common words which every student should know, will be needed to make up an elementary German grammar in German. As the time arrives for the student to grapple with the more intricate laws of the language, he will be able to understand the more difficult phraseology needed to express them. And, we may add, if a teacher succeeds in couching a new grammatical principle in such language as his pupils with close attention can understand, it will make a greater impression upon them than an ordinary explanation in English.

Little stress should at first be laid on translation from English into German. The method long used in Larousse's grammars and lexicologies for the public schools of France is far preferable ; and, besides, the place of translation into German may be largely taken by the answers to grammatical and lexicological questions which the pupil must give in German. Nor should translation in class from German into English receive as much time as it ordinarily does. Interpretation in German should be largely substituted. The chief use of translating in class what the student has read at home, is to assure the teacher that the student has understood the true meaning of the text. If he can assure himself of this by way of asking questions on the text in German, additional training for the pupil is secured. How do teachers teach German in German schools or English in English schools ? If the class read such matter as at their stage of advancement they should read, — and we are always inclined to give our students too difficult things to read, — the greater part of the text should be readily understood by the student. There will be difficult passages, and there should be ; but in the great majority of cases the difficulty of a passage hinges upon the meaning or syntactical relation of one or two words, and, with a sufficient German grammatical vocabulary at his disposal, the teacher can generally explain such meaning or relation without leaving the territory of the German language. If this be done as a rule, an occasional resorting to translation, if it be deemed best, will do no harm.

This is, in outline, the method we should recommend. Let us now turn to a consideration of the advantages it offers. Everybody will agree that the ideal method of studying German is to go to Germany, mingle with the people, read newspapers, go to the theatre, and, last, but not least, place one's self under an experienced teacher who has a thorough knowledge of English and understands the student's difficulties and can answer his questions. Under such conditions rapid prog-

ress and good results are inevitable. Now, what are the essential features of these conditions, and to what extent may they be reproduced in the class-room? Is there anything peculiar about the atmosphere of Germany that makes it easier to learn German there than here? Doubtless, to understand a nation's literature, it is very desirable to see the country, observe the habits, and study the character of the people, and see as much as possible of their life in all its phases; but in order merely to learn the language, such direct contact with country and people is of much less importance. The reason why we make such rapid progress in a foreign language as soon as we arrive in the country where it is spoken, is not so much that we now study the language in its own home, but rather that we have so many more opportunities to hear and speak it. The difference between the training which we get in the class-room by the ordinary methods and that which we get in the foreign country is not necessarily one of kind, but one of quantity. It is one of kind in so far as in the foreign country we often have occasion to associate a new word or idiom with some personal observation or experience, which impresses it upon our minds; but this naturally holds good only of a limited part of the language-material, and, to a small extent, this advantage may be secured even in ordinary class-instruction. The most essential difference is, as we have said, one of quantity, and this difference in quantity is enormous. No method of teaching can make up for the advantages which a stay in the foreign country offers; but we contend that a more extensive use of the foreign language in the class-room can greatly reduce the disadvantages under which class-instruction at home ordinarily labors.

In the majority of institutions with which we are acquainted, by far the greater part of the time devoted to German is given to translation from German into English, and translation from English into German. Neither exercise allows the student to think in German for more than a few moments consecutively,

even if he tried, not to speak of its affording him absolutely no incentive to do so. Aside from the reading of the German text, and even that is not always done, the student hears and speaks nothing but English; in other words, for about ten minutes out of possible fifty, he learns German, the remaining forty minutes he learns facts about German. On the other hand, if, as above suggested, the instruction be carried on entirely in German, the student will learn German for fifty minutes. In addition to the study of the grammatical subject under discussion, or of the text before him, he has all the grammatical, lexicological, and literary comments in German. We all know the value of a vast amount of easy reading for the acquisition of a language. It seems a low estimate if we consider the amount of German the student will hear in each recitation over and above the text itself, equal to ten ordinary pages of an easy text; this would be equal to from one thousand to two thousand pages a year, according to the number of recitations. It seems evident that this must considerably increase and strengthen the student's knowledge of the language. As stated above, the reason of the rapid progress we make in a foreign language as soon as we arrive in the country where it is spoken, is simply that we continually hear the same forms, the same words, the same combinations of words. If German is spoken in the class-room, every sentence — whether spoken or read — will be a drill in the noun and adjective declensions, in the conjugation, in the government of prepositions, and in the elementary rules for arrangement. We suppose, of course, that the teacher is thorough, and that no faulty answer is ever allowed to pass.

The difficulty about reading German at sight is not that the necessary vocabulary is so large, but that the student is commonly brought face to face at once with too many of the rarer words, and in his bewilderment he has no opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with the most common ones. And any uncertainty as to the meaning of these common words

which the student ought to know, and might know, will materially lessen his capacity for correctly guessing the meaning of a rarer word occurring in the same passage. An examination of ten pages of Goethe's prose chosen at random shows that the articles, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliaries, and the most common adverbs constitute no less than fifty-eight per cent of his vocabulary. If the student has these at his fingers' ends, together with a reasonable number of nouns and adjectives, and the strong and most important weak and irregular verbs, he will have an excellent hold on the vocabulary of the language; and certainly a method like the one described will keep these fundamental terms sounding in his ears until he is as familiar with them as with their English equivalents.

One of the most fatal mistakes that teachers of modern languages in colleges are liable to make is to hurry their classes too much. The time allotted to their work is short and their aims are high; no wonder, they often give their students too difficult work. It would be much better for the student never to attempt to read a German classic in the original, than to slur over the elements of German, and then spell out or guess at Goethe's or Lessing's thoughts, or take frequent tumbles from the noble flights of Schiller's language into the regions of the adjective declension. German classics are not proper reading-material for the first year. "It is not knowing German to be able to work one's way through a foot-note and just miss the point from not knowing the force of a modal auxiliary." The use of German in the class-room will be found a wholesome corrective of this evil. The teacher, being obliged to make himself understood by his students, will not present to them material for which they are as yet unprepared.

Again, in this way, and only in this way, does the student become acquainted with the spoken language. This is a matter of no mean importance, and is well worth careful considera-

tion; but only a few points can be mentioned here. The literary language is to a certain extent a dead language; the spoken language, on the other hand, exhibits life, action, linguistic tendencies. We believe in teaching in college the principles of linguistic development, and these principles are better illustrated by the spoken language than by the language of literature. Moreover, a knowledge of the every-day speech of a people is necessary for the intelligent appreciation of its literature. The character of literary productions, of authors, of schools of poetry, of entire periods of literature, is often defined by their relation to the every-day speech of the people. How, then, can we make students appreciate the character of the works they are reading unless we give them the standard of the every-day speech to measure by? Can any one appreciate the simple grandeur of the language of the English Bible, or the loftiness of that of Milton, who does not know how English-speaking people commonly express themselves? No one particular work, however perfect it may be, can adequately reflect the character of a language or a literature; on the contrary, there is nothing more characteristic of a language than the diversity of uses to which it can be put. The every-day speech of the people seems to be the best starting-point for the study of the various languages within a language, and the most natural standard of comparison.

As we have already said, it would be impossible to use German exclusively in very large first or second year classes. But even in classes of forty or fifty a slight beginning may be made. The least that may be expected from the very beginning is that no sentence shall ever be translated until the German has been read aloud. This reading of the text, so far from delaying rapid progress, as some teachers think, results ultimately in a great gain of time. It is the only way students can ever be taught to comprehend the construction and meaning of a sentence at the first glance, without translation into English. A compli-

cated construction often becomes clear as soon as the teacher reads the sentence aloud with some expression. A great amount of time is wasted in translating matter that really offers no serious difficulties and might be readily understood on the first careful reading of the text. Systematic efforts in this direction from the very first, coupled with a careful selection of sufficiently easy reading-material, will generally enable the teacher to dispense with translation to some extent, even in classes too large to make any extensive use of German for grammatical and lexicological explanations possible. Moreover, the reading aloud of German is necessary to make the student familiar with the sound and rhythm of the language, a familiarity that he must possess, if he would ever understand lyric and dramatic poetry. All this would seem to go without saying; yet the writer knows of institutions where, a few years ago, it was the custom to translate Heine's poems into English, while the German text was never read. Surely, students that cannot understand Heine's lyrics after the simple reading of the text, and a few explanations, — either in German or in English, as the teacher may deem best, — are not yet ready to read Heine.

Under ordinarily favorable circumstances the student should, by the beginning of the third year, have become so familiar with the sound of the language and the ordinary vocabulary, that he may begin to read the easier classics without translating more than occasional passages of exceptional difficulty. The time in class may then be devoted to interpretation in German, and to the discussion of the poet's life and works, likewise in German. We do not advocate that the pupils should always speak German; under ordinary circumstances they cannot have had practice enough to do this without serious loss of time. But the teacher should, as a rule, speak German. Experience at Harvard and elsewhere shows that where systematic efforts in this direction are made, the results have been good. Toward the end of the

year there will be very few things connected with an outline-study of the classic writers of the eighteenth century that the teacher cannot present to his students in German. The advantages are apparent. The greater part of the time that is commonly devoted to translation becomes available either for additional reading, or for the discussion of things for which there is usually no time, while the constant use of the language in the class-room may very largely take the place of special exercises in grammar and composition. Occasional examinations, conducted at least partially in English, amply suffice to control the progress of every member of the class and enable the teacher to adapt his method of treating the subject to the capacity and needs of his students.

Much has been said and written about the disciplinary value of the study of modern languages, and about the necessity of using certain methods of instruction to insure these disciplinary advantages. It seems to us that here there is danger of mistaking the means for the end. To regard a certain method of acquiring the new language rather than its possession as insuring literary culture and scholarship, seems to us a fundamental mistake, and one that cannot help exercising a harmful influence on this important branch of instruction. To our mind, the man that knows three languages thoroughly is an educated man to the extent to which the study of three languages can make him such, whatever method he may have pursued in their acquisition. Surely there is no special virtue in learning paradigms or rules of syntax, except as they help us to understand and use the language, or as a means of cultivating the memory; and for this latter purpose, selections from the best prose and poetry would seem to have the advantage in point of greater intrinsic value. On the other hand, surely no one will deny that an accurate knowledge of several languages, such as enables its possessor to read Goethe and Victor Hugo intelligently, and to distinguish between the styles of different authors and the lan-

guage of different periods, is evidence of high culture. It should not be supposed that such a knowledge can ever be acquired without the benefit of considerable mental discipline. Under very favorable circumstances, as when a person has acquired the elements of the foreign language when very young, and has had constant opportunity to hear and speak it, the process may have been a slow one and the discipline may not at any time have been very severe, but the aggregate effect must be the same; just as a person that has always lived an active out-door life is apt to have a sound and well-trained body, without having ever gone through a regular course of "developing exercises." The question which the world puts to the student is not whether the method by which he learned German was productive of mental discipline, but whether he knows German. Nor is this way of putting the question confined to those intensely practical people that have no sympathy with the higher objects of liberal studies. A person that should claim to be permeated with the spirit of Greek culture, but could not read Homer or tell who Pericles was, would be ridiculed everywhere, and justly so. All discussions about lending any special disciplinary value to the study of modern languages by the use of certain methods of instruction seem to us sheer waste of time. Let us teach the student German and French, and not trouble ourselves about mental discipline; that will come of itself. If we give the student a sound, well-rounded knowledge of these languages, his faculties will of necessity be improved, and he will be better equipped for any profession he may afterward enter. The only question for us to consider is how to use the very limited time to the best advantage, so that we may take the student to the farthest possible point on the road toward a mastery of the tongue we profess to teach.

A word, however, should be added about the special claim so commonly made that the greatest disciplinary advantages of language-study are after all to be obtained from the exercise of translating from one language into another, and especially

from a foreign language into the student's vernacular. It has been said that every study, whether of Greek, mathematics, history, biology, or German should also be an exercise in English. We are prepared to grant this, but only in one sense. As far as the English language is used in the class-room, or in any exercise connected with the work in hand, it should be good and vigorous English. But the chief duty of the teacher of German is, after all, to teach German, not English. If he can incidentally contribute to the student's knowledge of English, it is clearly within his function to do so; but he will render English studies a greater service if he improves his instruction in German in such a manner that the student learns more in a given time and gains more time for special work in English. Nor can the exercise of translating from German into English be regarded as especially useful in the acquisition of a good English style. On the contrary, for the same reasons for which we have above recommended the discontinuance of translation into German wherever the conditions render a better method possible, we must also regard the exercise of translating from German or any other foreign language into English as harmful rather than useful as far as the acquisition of a good English style is concerned; harmful at least if carried to such an extent as is ordinarily the case. The fact that there are so few really good translations in any language is abundant proof that translating is an exceedingly difficult thing, far too difficult for the ordinary student — or teacher, for that matter — to attempt, except in very small amounts and with very great care. Frequent exercises in writing brief abstracts, in the student's own language, without the book before him, would seem to us much more useful in forming a good and vigorous English style, than a large amount of indifferent translating.

# GERMAN.

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